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# HONEST DAVIE.

A Nobel.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

'LIEUTENANT BARNABAS,' 'A PRODIGAL'S PROGRESS,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# HONEST DAVIE.

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## CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH GEORGE FALKLAND SPEAKS FOR  
HIMSELF.

**T**HE political events of '92 compelling English residents to quit Montpellier, my father and I went to Florence ; and there in the following year he died, to my extreme sorrow, for it seemed to me that the place he had filled in my heart must now be for ever vacant.

I had been a gentleman commoner at Oxford but six months, when my mother

died, and my father withdrew me ; for it was then that, falling sick of the lingering complaint which never afterwards left him, he felt the necessity of having a young and lively companion to amuse him and perform those services which he could not endure from a paid servant. It was a misfortune for me, which, despite the natural affection of a son, I felt severely at the time ; for I had entered the University, like most young fellows, full of ambitious hopes, and counted upon taking honours and fitting myself for some public office which I hoped my uncle—Lord Kestral—would obtain for me. My father had quarrelled with his brother, and declared that no one ever got anything but promises from his lordship, for the very simple reason that he had nothing else to give. And this, as I found later on, was substantially true. My uncle, when a young man, had bought a seat in Parliament of

Lord Bute; and by dint of serving that unscrupulous Minister indefatigably and spending his money lavishly in corrupting his venal adversaries, he had been counted among the number of the King's friends, and been rewarded with a title. But with the fall of Bute in '63, Lord Kestral lost his seat in Parliament, and with it all hope of obtaining a place from his Majesty, whom he could no longer serve, so that he was left with nothing in exchange for the fortune he had wasted but his patent of nobility. My father equally derided the projects I formed of obtaining eminence in physic or law. 'Why should you trouble your head about such stuff?' he would ask. 'Cannot you leave the professions to the poor devils who have to adopt them for their livelihood? You know as much Greek and Latin as is necessary to a gentleman; then why not rest content with that position?' But, indeed,

these appeals to my reason had less effect upon my mind than his invocation of my affection had upon my heart ; and seeing how weak and dependent his malady rendered him, I should have been wanting in every sentiment of filial love and duty to have left him alone for my own selfish ends. He was ever most indulgent and kind to me, though at times he was naturally irritable and impatient ; he denied me nothing which I had a mind to, and seemed never better pleased than when he found me amusing myself with the harpsichord, a book of plays, or a bit of wood-carving, to which art I was always vastly attached. Seeing me engaged in these trivial pleasures, he possibly felt assured that I had abandoned all thoughts of taking to a serious career and leaving him. In truth I found it easy enough after awhile to be idle, and fell quietly into the manner of living which he thought most

desirable ; in due course I became a very indolent, careless young gentleman, with no particularly vicious inclinations, nor any of a remarkably virtuous sort. For six years my father and I were never separated for a day together ; in the early part we lived at my father's house in Kent, the latter part of the time was spent at Montpellier and Florence ; but from the first to the last he never said a word to me of his pecuniary circumstances. He avoided the subject, as also did I ; for never having felt the want of money, I never knew the value of it, and I was fully as indifferent to the future as I was to the past. By a word now and then my father led me to suppose—though I do not think he wilfully intended to deceive me—that I should have a sufficient competency at his death ; my surprise may be imagined, therefore, when, his affairs being set in order by a lawyer, I found that Falkland Hall,

which had been in the family from the time it was built in 1664, had been secretly sold to discharge a mortgage, and that there remained of my father's fortune no more than a few hundred pounds for me to begin life with. The concealment of this fact was but a phase of my father's affection, for he clearly would have had no reserve but for the dread of my going away to seek my fortune. Not for one moment did I regret this change of condition ; though I admit I felt sorry to think the old house which had been my home, and of which I was properly proud—for it is as charming a dwelling-house as one may wish to see—was sold and gone into strange hands. Indeed, it somewhat mitigated my sorrow in the loss of my father, by giving my thoughts a new turn, and inspiring my mind with fresh hopes, and I know not what feelings beside. I was not past the age of romance, and the

notion of encountering hardships and overcoming difficulties in my struggle for eminence was as great an incentive to the undertaking as the perils of a voyage are to the hardy adventurer upon strange seas.

My chief trouble was that which is oft reported of fabulous heroes at first starting—the difficulty of determining which road should be taken in the search for fame and fortune ; and as they, in most cases, took their direction from a puff of wind, so was I content to be guided by that which is not one whit more substantial—namely, the breath of flattery.

I had become acquainted with some very pretty young gentlemen artists in Florence, and daily spent some hours with them in their studio. Amongst them there were two or three learning the art of sculpture, and having, as I have said, a particular fancy for carving, and the like, nothing pleased me better than

to watch them modelling of heads and figures in clay and wax. From watching, I got to imitating them, and having procured a piece of soft wax and taken it home, I privily modelled my father's head in *basso-relievo*; and was so well satisfied with my work, that I took it to the studio and quietly stood it upon a shelf, where works were deposited for the master's inspection.

‘Who did this?’ he asked, taking up my work and looking at it.

None of the pupils replied, and I considered it wise to hold my tongue, for I feared every moment he was about to burst out laughing at it, being particularly severe at times upon bad work.

‘Who did this?’ he repeated.

One after another the pupils excused themselves, and it was coming to my turn to speak, when he said, with a caustic sneer:

‘You need not trouble yourselves, gentle-

men, to disown this work; I was wrong to ask the question, for I perceive clearly 'tis none of your handiwork. The man who modelled this is a genius.'

I do not know whether he really meant this, or said it to flatter me, suspecting it was my work. I had the reputation for being rich, and had stood treat for many a dinner, and it may be imagined he lost nothing by this compliment. One consequence was, that I immediately entered my name in his school, and paid him very liberally for some private lessons which he hinted I should take.

It was the flattery of this man and of my fellow-pupils, who were ever ready to say a good word for my work or borrow a crown, that induced me to think of winning my fortune as a sculptor at the death of my father. For law or physic I had now no partiality, nor had I the time and money to bestow upon

necessary studies; moreover, art already fascinated me, and I doubtless overrated my powers by the eulogies bestowed upon my productions; therefore, it seemed to me that no occupation in the world was more suited to my tastes and faculties than this of sculpture. I determined, however, to be guided by the advice of my master, so I went to him and frankly told him my position, asking him, at the same time, to tell me with equal candour if he thought I should do better to turn my energies to some other object. Having asked how much money I had to go on with, he assured me that I could do no better than to lay it out in perfecting my hand in his art. ‘And I warrant,’ says he, ‘that before the year is out you will produce something which shall make your name mentioned amongst the *dilettanti*; and that achieved, your fortune is made.’

With this encouragement I took a garret, and applied myself to modelling with indefatigable ardour. My master praised all I did; and, not to let my enthusiasm cool, bade me lay aside the clay and try my hand at the chisel. This proposal I accepted eagerly, and for the next six months I spent a great deal of money in good marble, and a great deal of time in spoiling it. There was scarcely room to turn in my garret for the busts and figures I had made, and kept there; for though everyone who saw my work expressed great admiration of it, and was willing enough to accept a piece as a gift, I found none who offered to buy a single thing. However, my master, every time I paid him for his instruction, or lent him the money for a bottle of wine, declared I was making vast progress, and that the time was not far distant when I should be able to name my own price for anything I

chose to sell—which was undoubtedly true if the customers had only come forward to ask the question. At the end of the year my funds were so diminished that I began to doubt the truth of all my master had said, especially as I perceived that his praises ranged according to my liberality. He had three degrees of praise—positive, ‘Fair,’ for pence; comparative, ‘Very good!’ for silver; and superlative, ‘Most excellent!’ for gold.

One morning, as I was on my way to the studio, an elderly man, whom I passed every morning at the same place—for he was as punctual as I was in his movements—stopped, and, after bidding me ‘Good-morning!’ very civilly, said he had perceived by my white frock that I was a sculptor, and being struck by my personal appearance and regular habits, had ventured to make inquiries concerning me; he added that he should be very glad to give me a little advice

if I would not feel offended by his presumption. I assured him that I should take nothing ill which was intended for my benefit; whereupon he told me that I was wasting time and money in the studio of Brugiotti, and that I should do better to have no master at all than such an one as he, who, regarding only his own interest, would retard my progress while there was any money to be got out of me.

‘However,’ says he, ‘do you show me a specimen of your work; and if you have ability, I will employ you in my yard, where you will learn more in a week than Brugiotti could teach you in a year.’

I thanked Signor Sani—for that he gave me to understand was his name—and took him at once to my garret, where I showed him my work. He looked at the marbles with much gravity for some time; then glancing round the room, he asked where were my models.

‘Models,’ said I; ‘I have none. Brugiotti insists upon cultivating the imagination.’

At this Sani laughed.

‘But surely,’ says he, ‘you worked out your idea first in clay.’

I told him I did nothing of the kind, but worked out my idea directly upon the marble.

‘Then no wonder,’ says he, ‘your work is so hard. You have attempted to do what Buonarotti himself could not have done. Don’t you know that all sculptors first execute their designs in clay, and then point them on the marble before touching the block?’

‘Pray, sir, what is this pointing?’ I asked, with all the simplicity imaginable.

Sani seemed astounded at the question, which indeed seems to me now an astonishing piece of ignorance; but it is natural, for I had never been in any studio but that

of Brugiotti. where I alone worked in marble.

‘I perceive,’ says Signor Sani, ‘you know not even the rudiments of your art ; but the work you have shown me proves that you have an indefatigable devotion to it, and therefore I will take you into my yard if you will observe obedience to my directions and pay me a trifle down.’

I gratefully accepted the proposal, and, my little fortune being now reduced to four hundred crowns, I offered Sani half, which he clapped in his pocket without much ado, and reserved the rest for my board and lodging, determining to live even more frugally than before ; and we then went together to the work-yard, where I saw at a glance more than I had ever yet dreamed of. I found that Sani did a large export business in antique marbles, or rather in imitation antiques, which were copied so

closely from the original, even to the fractures and stains, that it was difficult to detect the difference. It was a very lucrative, if not a very honourable business, and it astonished me to learn how many of these counterfeit antiquities were sold to English dealers, and to think that a nation so remarkable for sound sense could spend such vast sums of money on what was in most cases worthless ; for, of course, the most beautiful and well-known statues were seldom multiplied in this manner, but generally some fragment, so mutilated and disfigured that scarcely a trace of the original outline remained, was copied, and of these many hundreds were turned out by Sani in the course of a year. Nevertheless, as I recollect, he received an order for four Apollo Belvideres while I was with him.

There was a gallery filled with models, chiefly copies in plaster of fragments and

famous statues ; and in another gallery a score of artists worked at the marble, copying their models by pointing, which delicate and interesting process I then saw for the first time. But it was not here that I was set to work. Sani told me I must begin at the very beginning, and he set me to work in the yard squaring a block of marble which had just come in rough-hewn from the quarry.

I was kept in the yard for six weeks at this rough and simple employment, and then I was promoted to the casting-room, where I learnt to cast and make piece-moulds in plaster. And here I stayed for six months, during which time I certainly did work which Sani would have paid another man a good two crowns a week to perform ; but he never gave me a penny-piece, for he was fully as avaricious as Brugiotti, and only more honest because it

would not have been to his advantage to be otherwise. But I in nowise begrudged giving my time and labour, for it was an apprenticeship from which I learnt a great deal that was of service to me. I made the acquaintance of several good artists, who advised me to give all my spare time to modelling in clay and copying nature truthfully ; and, with this principle in my mind, I devoted more time to the faithful production of a single feature than before I had given to an entire figure.

From the casting-room I went to the modellers' gallery, where I kneaded clay for the artists, kept the models moist with damp cloths, and occasionally was permitted to 'rough out' a model for the sculptor to work upon.

I had been with Sani fifteen months, when, my store of pieces coming to an end, it became necessary that I should be

paid for my labour in order to subsist. I put my case to Sani, who, after much demurring, agreed to give me two crowns a week; and, taking me from the modelling-room, where the work I did in a day a woman or a boy could do for a few pence, he placed me in the sculptors' gallery, where I once more took up the chisel. As it was now to Sani's advantage that I should do the higher kind of work, he himself taught me the art of pointing, and set me to work upon the marble. I made rapid progress, and, after being in this department best part of two years, I completed, without assistance or guidance, a copy of the Venus di Milo, which Sani declared needed only staining to be sent into England and sold for the original. This was the last piece of work I did there, for when I came to reflect, after the first flush of triumph was passed, I perceived that my occupation, though not

culpable in the eye of the law, was nevertheless as disgraceful to a man of proper feeling as if he were engaged in casting false money. It was a species of forgery, and, as it seemed to me, all the worse for being perpetrated in the name of Art. I therefore gave Sani notice that I should leave him, and, though he offered to give me four times as much as I had been receiving if I would stay with him, I was firm in my resolve, and at the end of the week bade him and my fellow-workmen farewell.

I have dwelt long and perhaps tediously upon this part of my history, because of the important effect these years had upon my life. I owe to them the formation of my character. From a frivolous, careless idler I had grown to be an earnest, thoughtful workman, with a certain power of patient perseverance which astonishes me now when

I recollect how impetuous and variable my temper was formerly. My love of art had grown steadily and become inseparable from my life, so that it seemed to me I could only relinquish the one with the other. I had learnt to distinguish between real and false art, and in addition I had obtained a sound and practical knowledge of the mechanic part of the sculptor's business, and could use a chisel with as great a nicety as any man in Sani's factory ; so that though I may never be a great sculptor, I can at least say without flattery that I am a good mason.

And I have reason to thank Providence that I was a good mason.





## CHAPTER II.

OF FALKLAND'S ILL AND GOOD FORTUNE.

**I**T will be imagined that I had not laid by much money during my stay with Signor Sani. Nevertheless, a couple of crowns a week had been more than sufficient for my requirements ; for a workman can live cheaply in Florence, where chestnuts and macaroni form the staple articles of diet, and garrets upon the outskirts of the town are to be had for next to nothing. In counting up my savings I found I had, all told, the equivalent of fifty shillings and threepence ; and this I reckoned would be

sufficient to maintain me while I was finding new employment. But employment, I discovered, was difficult to get; for, besides that Italian artists preferred workmen of their own nationality, one and all objected to having anything to do with a man who had worked for Sani. To use a vulgar expression, his name stank in Florence, and he imparted an evil odour to all about him. Day after day I spent in fruitless efforts to get work; and then, when all my money was gone, I did that which I had long hesitated to do: I wrote to my uncle—Lord Kestral—for the loan of a sum of money to carry me to England. I had learnt, as far back as '91, that his lordship was no longer a bachelor, nor a needy man, having married the widow of a millionaire; and I thought that now was the time to remind him of those promises he had made so profusely when I was a lad and required nothing.

I had not heard from my uncle since my

dear father's death, when he wrote to express his great sorrow, and to inquire if any legacy was his by his brother's will; nor had I written to him once in the six years that had passed since that melancholy occasion, so that I felt reluctant to beg a favour of one whom I had so neglected. However, he was my nearest relative, and as he could well afford to help me, I did not doubt of his ready response to my request. I waited three months in expectation, and then, no reply coming, I concluded that either he must be dead, or that, having laid my letter aside, he had forgotten all about it, for I knew his memory to be exceedingly treacherous; though from what I now know of his character, I believe that his silence was due to my own indiscretion in stating the purpose to which I intended to employ his loan. He might have sent me a few guineas to remain in Florence, but had not the heart to put me

in the way of making further calls upon his generosity.

As I had endured the greatest privations in the last few weeks, and my position allowed of no further delay, I went to the municipal authorities and laid my case before them. When the truth of my story was ascertained, I was sent on to Genoa, where the British Consul had me put aboard a merchant vessel which was then on the point of starting under convoy for England. After an eventless voyage I was set ashore at Dover; and there, on the very morning of my arrival—which was, strangely enough, ten years to a day from the date of my leaving it with my father—I had the good fortune to get employment in a mason's yard. The hardships I had endured latterly would have reconciled me to this lowly occupation had my pride revolted against it; but, indeed, I was never ashamed of

being seen in my smock or employed in rough work, and was rather inclined to let my vanity err on the other side by overrating the value of a workman and his claim to admiration.

However, it was not as a mason that I wished to pass my life. I longed to be again in a sculptor's workshop, and to make the shapeless stone take beautiful form ; and so, as soon as I had saved a few shillings, I quitted Dover and set out on foot for London, where I hoped to find an artist more ready to engage me than those of Florence had been. As I tramped along the road and came in sight of the weald of Kent—which was now in its loveliest aspect, for the month was May—I could not but think of my home with a sentiment of regret, and a longing to see again the old house with its terrace and wide-spreading, smooth lawn ; and this feeling gained such ascendancy

when I came to a rise whence I could see the village of Maplehurst, and fancied I saw the red-brick chimneys of Falkland House rising above the thicket of larches beyond, that I resolved to turn out of my path, though it cost me a couple of leagues, in order to gratify my desire. And so I came to my old home.

The gates of the long drive were open, and it was with the strangest emotion I looked down the path which I had so often trod, but now had no right to set my foot upon, and then passed down the lane which skirted the grounds. I ascended a bank by the side of the lane, and looked over into the garden. Nothing was altered. There stretched away the paddock, with the avenue of larches on one side, the pond on the other; the yew hedge that separated it from the lawn, where the short turf was sprinkled with daisies, the steps

leading from the lawn to the terrace ; the embrasure in the wall at the end of the terrace, where my father and I used to sit and watch the sun setting over the weald—I seemed to know every stone in the wall, and remarked one that was loose, and had been loose in the old days ; and the house itself, with its red-brick façade and flamboyant gables, and the tall twisted chimneys, and the many windows with their diamond panes, and the odd projections and recesses which gave it such a quaint beauty—all was unchanged—all save the people who lived in it. A gentleman in a handsome dress was standing on the terrace, and beside him was a man with a rule in his hand ; they were talking together, and looking up at the north end of the house as if they contemplated making some alteration. And whether it was the notion of the old house being altered, or a feeling of solitude and aliena-

tion, or merely the memory of past happiness, I know not; but something at that moment so wrung my heart that, as I stepped down into the road again and walked away, the tears dropped down from my eyes.

I stopped at the inn in the village to refresh myself, and as I was drinking my ale in the tap-room two men entered the house talking :

‘ Gi’ un a smack wi’ ’s hammer and smashed the nose off’s face,’ says one ; ‘ an’ what’s to be done wi’ ’un now’s more’n I can tell you.’

The speaker rapped on the bar with a piece of money, and his companion, after a moment’s silence, said in a small piping voice :

‘ Can’t ’e stick’s noase on again ?’

‘ No. ’Tis smashed all to nought, I tell ye.’

‘ Can’t ’e put a new un on ?’

‘ Why, so we’ve been a-tryin’ and a-tryin’ to do. My man Jo’s as handy a man as

any in the county of Kent, and he made sure's if he cut a hole in's face he could stick a new un in ; so what's 'e do but sit up all night gettin' new nose ready, and 's good a nose it was as you'd wish to see ; so come'n this mornun, we cuts a hole in's face, and sticks the nose in. But, bless you'er heart, that only made un wus 'an ever ; for why, his face looks one way and's nose pints t'other.'

' Good Lord, master !' exclaimed the landlady, who had come to the bar, and was listening with terror to this history, 'sure some awful accident's happened !'

'To be sure there has. Draw us a pot of ale, mistress,' replied the man ; and then, addressing his companion, he continued : ' And to make the matter wus, his cheeks is brown and's nose's white, and paint makes un no better.'

' 'Tis a dreffle bad job, to be sure,' says

the man with the little shrill voice, 'for the Cap'n do set a mighty store by the image.'

''Tis an image you are speaking of,' cries the landlady, in a tone of relief. 'Heaven be praised 'tis no worse!'

'I wish't had been anything else.'

''Tis the image of Sir Anthony Clifford in the church,' the piping voice explained. 'Mr. Chives's men are repairing the stone in front of the tomb, and Mr. Chives's son Tom, who was gaming about with a hammer——'

'Boy-like,' interposed the landlady.

'Boy-like or not, I'll gi' un a dressing fit for a man when I catch un,' says the father. 'The young hound's hid himself; but he'll get a surer hiding than that when I find un. 'Tis as good as thirty pound a year out of my pocket, for the Cap'n gave me all the repairs on his estate; and now 'tis all to nothing he'll never let me see

the colour of his money again when he finds what's happened to the family stone.'

'Can't you send up to Lunnon for some of these artist chaps to come down?'

'Much good that'll do me! They'll never touch a job before they've taken three weeks to think about it; and then they'd make such a crowing and to do over it, that there'd be no keepin' it from the Cap'n's ears, even if so be he don't come down to his seat afore the job's done. Plague take me if I know what to do!'

At this I rose from my seat, and going to the bar where the two men stood, I addressed myself to the larger, who I concluded must be he who was placed in such a quandary by the playfulness of his son, and told him I was a sculptor just arrived from Italy, and that I would undertake to restore the broken figure, if upon examination I found it within my power to do so.

Mr. Chives looked me full in the face, and seeing that I was a likely looking man for the job, he proposed that we should go together and look at the work at once.

I knew the tomb of Sir Anthony Clifford well. It was a work of the Elizabethan period in high relief, and represented the knight with his five sons kneeling in an attitude of prayer on one side, facing his wife, who knelt with her six daughters behind her on the other; and I could not help smiling at the effort of the 'handy man,' Joe, to repair the damaged face of Sir Anthony—for the nose, which he had sat up all night to make, had been stuck in as if the figure were presented at full face instead of in profile, so that, as Mr. Chives had said, the face looked one way and the nose stood at right angles with it, and the effect was very ludicrous. It was not a difficult job, although the lines of the face

and upper lip had been cut away to make room for the new feature, and I promised to restore the face as nearly as possible to the original lines, and to stain the marble in harmony, so that the restoration would be noticeable only on very close inspection, if he would provide me with tools and materials.

‘ Well,’ says he, after a little deliberation, ‘ you shall have a try at un, for you can’t make un much wus ’an he is ; and if you succeed, I’ll give—let me see, now ’—he scanned my clothes as if to judge how little he might pay — ‘ I’ll give you half-a-guinea.’

‘ If I succeed,’ said I, ‘ you must pay me five guineas ; if I fail, I agree to take out my work and charge you nothing.’

He expressed great astonishment at my demand, and tried to bring me to some abatement ; but as I firmly declined to do

it for less, and he knew full well it would cost him double to have a sculptor from London, he at length agreed, and, taking a list of the things I required, which he promised to furnish that evening—for his shop was at Maidstone, which is seven miles from Maplehurst—he got into his cart and drove off, with his handy-man lying in the straw at his feet ; for poor Joe, since his failure as an artist, had been drowning mortification in old ale, and was now completely drunk.

I was eager to begin. The work required a certain amount of artistic skill and judgment, and was for that reason agreeable to me. I would have done it for the mere pleasure it would yield me—indeed, I would have done it to get Chives out of his difficulty, or to save his unlucky son a thrashing ; certainly, I should not have asked him more than he offered me, had he not thought me too poor to refuse half-a-guinea and at-

tempted to profit by my misfortune. No sooner was he gone than I borrowed a shovel, and, going down into the valley, I dug out a spit of clean clay ; then, having returned the spade to the landlady of the inn, I carried my clay to the church. In my absence the door had been locked by the sexton's wife, who, while I was seeking another entrance, came up to me with the keys in her hand. She was a stout, motherly woman, neatly dressed, and with a spotless cap. Her name was Mrs. Blight, and she had a ludicrous sense of her own importance as the wife of a man who was both sexton and clerk of the parish. I remembered her well, but the last ten years and my late troubles had so altered my appearance, that she failed to recognise me.

‘ You’re one of Mr. Chives’s young men, I suppose ? ’ said she. ‘ Do you want to go into the church ? ’

‘I do—and I’ll thank you to open the door at once,’ said I, ‘for this clay is not light.’

‘You’re not going to do anything at Captain Clifford’s monument to-day, I hope,’ said she, when the door was open.

‘Indeed, but I am.’

‘Well, I don’t know as it’ll be convenient for you to be chipping about there, for there’s a young lady a-coming a picter-painting close by.’

‘To be sure,’ said I, throwing down the clay, ‘’twill be inconvenient; but I must try and put up with it.’

‘I’ll have you to know that I don’t think it becoming in a person of your position to make jokes, young man; and, as my husband is sextant of this church, you’d better behave yourself.’

‘That I will,’ said I, ‘for I’ve a prodigious respect for the clergy. And now,

mother, I must go out for a few minutes ; and, if the young lady comes in my absence, I beg you to see that she doesn't meddle with this clay.'

I left the good woman exclaiming against my 'imperance,' as she called it, and once more returned to the inn, where I had left the bundle containing my smock, and where Joe had left his tools. While I changed my coat for the smock, the landlady drew a quart of ale in a stone bottle and cut a good portion of bread and cheese, which she wrapped in a clean napkin for me to take with me ; for I was resolved not to leave my work until the light faded. This provision I carried with Joe's tools to the church, where I found myself alone ; for Mrs. Blight had gone, and the expected visitor had not yet arrived. I set to work at once. The first thing was to take out the nose with which Joe had adorned Sir

Anthony, but here I encountered some difficulty; for the thorough-going workman had embedded the feature in strong glue, which had been speedily hardened by the marble, and it was only to be got out with the chisel. I was still at work with my hammer when Mrs. Blight brushed past me, carrying a colour-box and a stool in her hands.

‘That’s right, mother,’ said I, pausing to blow the dust from my work. ‘Brought the young lady’s playthings to keep her out of mischief?’

‘Mother indeed!’ cried the good woman. ‘I should be very sorry to be *your* mother, young man!’ and she set down the stool with a crash.

I turned round, as if in expectation of finding that she had smashed a leg off the seat in her indignation, and discovered that the young lady herself was standing close by, looking at me.



### CHAPTER III.

HOW GEORGE FALKLAND DISPLEASED THE  
YOUNG LADY, NOT VERY SERIOUSLY, AND  
WHO SHE WAS.

**I** REMOVED my hat and made the young lady a bow. She received my silent apology with a show of supercilious indifference. She was drawing off her gloves, and she stood looking at me without moving a muscle of her face until, laying aside my hat, I returned to my business.

Had she been a timid young girl, I should have been sorry for the words I had let fall,

fearing that they might discourage her, or put her out of heart with her amusement; but there was so much composure and self-esteem in this young lady's face, that I saw no reason to be concerned for the effect I had made on her mind. In my linen smock, and with my face all powdered with the fine dust I had been blowing from the white marble, I dare say I looked neither better nor worse than any other mason's man; and the opinions or reflections of people of that class are very contemptible to most young ladies of wealth and position.

‘Would you like me to walk up and down, miss?’ asked Mrs. Blight. I stayed my hammer an instant to catch the response.

‘Oh dear no!’ said the young lady in a very pretty voice, and with an accent which seemed to ridicule the notion of her requiring protection.

A very contemptuous, unpleasant young

person, thought I, as I fell to chipping away the marble.

‘Mother indeed!’ exclaimed Mrs. Blight again, as she brushed past me on her way out, and she cast a glance of the most profound contempt at me.

I went on with my work, never giving another thought to the young or the old lady until the cutting was finished, and the socket ready to receive the clay. The boards on which I stood were covered with chips, and raised too high for my convenience; they must be moved. There was an accumulation of chips and dust upon the monument also which must be brushed off. I was just about to begin these operations when I thought of the young lady’s wet colours. I turned about. She was taking some colour from her palette with a little frown upon her brow, as if she were irritated by failure. Perhaps the continual ‘clip,

clink, clip' of my chisel had distracted her thoughts, despite her self-command, and she was painting from a sheer determination not to be thwarted in her purpose by a mere mason.

'I must trouble you to cover your paints and canvas for a time,' I said. 'For I am about to move these boards, and the dust will fly.'

'Oh, this is very provoking!' cries miss, with a little stamp of the foot. 'Cannot you shake your boards when I am gone?'

'Certainly,' said I, amused by this display of petulance, 'if you will be good enough to go at once.'

'But I cannot go now, and I will not,' says she, looking at me with her brows contracted over her eyes, which, despite their expression of anger, were, I saw, particularly handsome. 'I have come here on purpose to paint.'

'And I am here on purpose to repair this

monument. If we cannot work together, it becomes a question of who can best afford to desist for a week or so—you who paint, as I presume, for amusement, or I who cut stone for my living.'

'You are very rude,' says the lady, rising from her seat.

'No, I am not—at least, not intentionally. Come, we are both losing time to no purpose but to increase your discomfort. I shall be glad to lessen your inconvenience if it is possible. I will remove all your paraphernalia to a place of safety, while you take a turn in the avenue without. One cannot walk there on a sweet spring day like this without a feeling of peace and goodwill towards all men—masons included. When you hear the ring of my chisel again, you may consider yourself free from further annoyance for the rest of the day.'

'I can remove my *paraphernalia* myself,'

said she, with a little less asperity in her tone, though it was clear she disliked the term I had applied to her paints and picture.

‘ You had better do as I bid you,’ said I, stepping up to her easel. I glanced at her picture, and was at once struck by the excellent painting of a column on which were given the colours from a stained window with such fidelity that I had to move the picture to be sure that it was not the light itself rather than the pigment I looked at. I had seen many young ladies who affected art in Florence, where one seldom sees an Englishwoman without a portfolio and a box of colours ; but as yet I had seen none whose work was not execrable. I had classed this young lady with these feeble *dilettanti*, and found I had done her a great injustice.

‘ Does it not strike you that you are acting with unwarrantable freedom ?’ asked

the young lady, who by her manner seemed undecided whether to be amused by the liberty I was taking or to resent it.

‘It did not occur to me to give the matter a thought before; but,’ said I, ‘now I look at your work I see no reason why I should not speak to you with perfect freedom. You are an artist.’

I looked up at her as I spoke, and perceived that my words caused a flush of pleasure to come into her pretty face; her eyes looked ten times handsomer in their present animation, and her lips, which were most delicately formed, took the sweetest curve, just showing a glimpse of her shining teeth. She could not have been more than eighteen years old, though previously, when her countenance was set in an expression of disdain, I had taken her to be more than twenty. It would have puzzled an indifferent person—

Mrs. Blight, for example—to explain why the simple remark of an artisan, engaged in dusty work and habited in the roughest manner, should make so great an effect upon the mind of a wealthy and proud young lady ; but remembering how elated I had felt in receiving the encouragement of Brugiotti, whom I knew to be a venal and interested rascal, I recognised in her emotion the feelings of an artist doubtful of her own ability and eager to rise above the rank of a mere dabbler in art.

She was silent, and I felt sure she expected me to say something more in praise of her work ; but I considered I had said as much as I had a right to say. Besides which, I knew the value of praise too well to abuse it. She suffered me to help her remove her materials, and moved with that lightness and elasticity which denotes cheerfulness ; indeed, it was evident

that she was better pleased with me than she had been at first, for when all was finished she said 'Thank you,' very graciously.

'Tis not such a terrible job after all—is it?' I asked, laughing; and then, remarking the elegance of her dress, I added, 'And now, go away; the dust will spoil your pretty dress.'

She obeyed, but with a little gesture of displeasure, as if she were not used to take commands from anyone; or as if, after being told she was an artist, it irritated her to be treated as a merely pretty and well-dressed young lady.

I quickly moved my scaffolding and dusted the monument; then, having replaced her easel—the position of which I had been careful to mark with a piece of chalk on the floor—and put her appliances in their original position, I took a few turns

with the hammer and chisel to apprise her that I had finished 'shaking my boards,' after which, settling down to my own business, I suffered the young lady to go clean out of my thoughts.

First, I kneaded a piece of clay sufficient for my purpose, beating it thoroughly and removing the grit to make it work well; and then, having well wetted the face of Sir Anthony and the socket, I squeezed the clay into the hole, and moulded it with my fingers into the feature that seemed to me, from a study of his sons' noses (which were all alike) to be such as had been originally there. This engrossed my thoughts entirely, nor should I once have thought of the young lady had I not been reminded of her presence by hearing a little cough. But I did not quit my work for a moment until I had roughly finished my operation, and was prepared to continue it with the little bone tool

I had brought with me from Florence. I dare say the lady took this inattention to her as another proof of my rudeness and the incivility of common workmen, an appearance which must have been heightened by my occasionally humming a tune, which is a habit with me whenever I find my work going well and smoothly.

The church clock striking two just as I came to this point in my work, I remembered that I had not yet eaten my dinner ; and, as I had taken no food since eight in the morning, certain sensations of hunger gave the recollection additional significance, and I resolved to satisfy the calls of Nature before going further in the pursuit of Art. As I turned to pick up the bundle containing my bread and cheese, I glanced at the young lady. Her attention was firmly fixed upon her work. I laid out my dinner on the napkin, and, sitting down upon the

scaffolding, I ate and regarded the pretty artist at the same time, thereby gratifying my taste for beauty as well as for bread and cheese. I think, from her manner of painting, which was obviously without order or precision, that she knew I had left off work and was regarding her. My silence may have led her to suppose that I was behind her, criticizing her performance. This seemed to me the more likely, because I saw the colour mount to her cheek, and presently she turned and looked over her shoulder, and then cast her eyes rapidly towards me, who at that moment was taking a bite out of the thick slice of bread. She instantly returned to her painting, and kept her attention fixed upon it for some time; when next I found her eyes upon me I was just setting down my stone bottle after taking a good draught from it. She turned away, as it seemed to my eyes, with

a little shiver of disgust. Her lips may have never touched anything grosser than crystal or porcelain.

The more I looked at her profile, the more it enchanted me—the outline was so delicate and fine, and every curve so exquisitely graceful. And then in the expression of her face there was, when she forgot my presence, that look which recalled to my mind Milton's picture of Penseroso, with the rapt soul sitting in her eyes. I took another drink from my bottle, and then, pulling out my little old note-book and a pencil, I proceeded to sketch the outline, thinking that it might be useful to me one day when I had time to do a little modelling. Now and then I laid down my book to take up the hunch of bread and cheese and get a mouthful. Once, as I was setting down my dinner and shifting back the pencil to my right hand, I found her regarding me. As

she resumed her position, I said, 'Thank you;' but my mouth was full, and I had better have said nothing. I was thus-wise employed sketching and eating, when Mrs. Blight came up the aisle, and did me the honour to look at what I was doing. Casting her eyes from the sketch to the young lady, she exclaimed:

'Well, upon my word, I call that impudence!'

'Do you?' said I. 'Now I call it devotion. I don't see any trace of impudence in the face of a beautiful girl who is studying beautiful things. However, as you call it impudence, mother, I suppose it must be so.'

'I beg you won't call me mother!' cried the good woman, in a rage; and then she went to the young lady, and, having informed her that a coach had been sent for her, she hoped that Mr. Chives's 'labourer' had not been annoying of her. At the

word 'labourer,' which she uttered with great emphasis, I ventured to groan, as if I were sorely wounded by the epithet. The young lady did not smile. She was, as I think now, annoyed that I should joke with such a person as Mrs. Blight. Holding my sketch at a little distance, I perceived that the contour of the chin was faulty, and, looking from it to the artist, I found that she had risen from her seat.

'May I ask you to sit again for a moment?' I said.

'So?' she asked, after sitting down with a smile at the end of a moment's hesitation.

'Yes, so. . . . That will do. . . . Thank you.'

'Well, of *all* the abomorable imperances!' exclaimed Mrs. Blight.

The young lady, having put on her hat and drawn on her gloves, turned to me and

inclined her head. I rose and made her the best bow I could, and she went away. It seemed as if the light had faded when she was gone, and I could not get her out of my mind until I again began work.

I had finished modelling Sir Anthony's nose to my satisfaction, and was covering my work with my damped handkerchief, when Mr. Chives came into the church.

'I've brought you your articles, young fellow,' says he, coming towards me. 'Hulloa! what have you been doing?'

I took off the handkerchief.

'Ad's my life!' cries he, 'if 'tain't the very thing, blame me!'

He expressed his delight with many other ejaculations, and finally offered to give me regular employment in his shop if I would be 'a bit reasonable;' but as I had higher hopes than to be his servant, I civilly declined his offer. I left him sounding my

praises to Mrs. Blight, and took a walk towards Leeds, through the lanes, which were at their very sweetest ; for the may was opening, and the air was fragrant with its nutty odour, and the thrushes and black-birds were whistling and singing in every thicket. But I own it was not alone the flowers and birds that filled my spirit with tender fancies. There dwelt in my mind the image of the beautiful young girl I had seen in the church, and so vividly did she stand out in my memory, as I inhaled the fragrant air, and caught with my ear the rich notes of the mated birds, that I do think I shall never hearken to the carolling of the thrush and smell the scent of may without a feeling of gentleness and longing love.

I own that as I passed the gates of a gentleman's garden that lay in my way, I peered through it to the right and left, with a vague hope that I might catch sight of

her—it was foolish indeed. She was still in my thoughts when I reached the inn, whither I returned while it was yet light—for the rain obliged me to curtail my walk ; and then, finding no book to read, and having no relish for the society in the tap-room, I bethought me of amusing myself with modelling until it was time to go to bed. I repaired to the church once more, and having furnished myself with an old tile and a lump of clay, I returned to the inn and obtained a candle, and went up to the room where I was to sleep. There I spread a piece of paper over the table, and having covered my tile an inch thick with clay, I sat down with my little old book at my side, and proceeded to model the face of the young lady in low relief. I worked at it until my candle was burnt to the end, when I was forced, with regret, to give over ; for the longer I studied the face,

the more I found in it to admire, and the more delight I found in portraying its beauties. I could not get to sleep for thinking of my medallion ; nor did I cease to think upon it until a cock in a stable hard by fell a-crowing, when somehow my thoughts took another turn, and I fell asleep. It was still early when I awoke ; the long shadows told me that the sun had risen but little over the horizon. Nevertheless, I dressed with all despatch, and sitting down by the table, uncovered my work—which I could not regard without satisfaction. I worked at it till it was finished ; and then, to test the value of my own judgment, I carried it downstairs, and setting it before the landlady, I said : ‘ Pray, madam, will you tell me if you ever remember to have seen a face like that ? ’

‘ Lord, ah, that have I ! ’ cried she, after

looking at it for a minute. 'To be sure, I know the look of that pretty face as well as my own; though I've seen my own a many times oftener than t'other. Dear heart! 'tis the very spit of her.'

'She lives in this neighbourhood?' I asked, prompted by a feeling of curiosity which I cannot attempt to account for.

'Surely she does. 'Tis Miss Adams, the young lady from Adams's Hall—as they call it now.'

'Adams's Hall?' I said, trying to recollect any house of that name.

'The red house about a mile up the road, as used to belong to Squire Falkland before he went away to furrin' parts. 'Tis quite lately let to this family.'

Now here was a discovery. The young lady was living in the very house in which I was born. I said nothing of this matter to the landlady, but taking the medallion,

which, as I pointed out to her, was wet and likely to get damaged, I carried it up to my room and set it in a safe place, with my handkerchief, moderately damp, laid over it, that it might be fit for casting when I had leisure.





## CHAPTER IV.

FALKLAND BIDS MISS ADAMS GOOD-BYE.—HIS  
HONESTY IS COMMENDED BY MRS. BLIGHT.

**I**T was late when I began work upon Sir Anthony Clifford's monument; however, by eleven o'clock I had covered the face, including the clay portion which I had modelled the day before, with a thick coat of plaster. This was to serve as a matrix for the cast, which in turn was to serve as my model in cutting the marble. While the plaster was hardening, I strolled to the other side of the church to examine a

marble, and was standing there when I heard voices outside, and Miss Adams entered the building. She passed down the aisle, and coming to 'the monument, she turned to Mrs. Blight and said, in a tone of satisfaction, which I know now was only assumed :

‘The mason has finished his work and gone, I see.’

‘No, that he isn’t, miss—worse luck,’ replied Mrs. Blight. ‘He was here not five minutes ago, and as sarcy as ever.’

I watched Miss Adams for some time without being seen, while Mrs. Blight arranged her easel and stool, complaining the while of me, and the airs which these workmen gave themselves. Miss Adams listened as she removed her bonnet and drew off her gloves. I found the lines of her figure as graceful and full of young beauty as her face, and should have stood there watching her move-

ments still longer, had she not thrown her glance across the church as she arranged her kerchief. I crossed the church and made her a bow, to which she replied by a slight bend; then I passed her and went to see how my plaster was drying.

‘Ah!’ exclaimed Mrs. Blight, whose spirit was still warlike. ‘*Some* people can hold their tongues when other people are present.’

‘’Tis a pity all people can’t—isn’t it, *madre?*’ said I.

‘My name’s not Marjery, sir. I was christened Martha, and I won’t be called out of my name by no one.’

‘Then Martha I will call you henceforth,’ said I.

The plaster was set. I carefully eased the mould off, and then with my tool removed the now useless clay from the fractured face of the monument. Mrs. Blight

left the church ; Miss Adams opened her colour-box, and began to dress her palette.

‘ You have no boards to shake this morning ? ’ said she inquiringly.

‘ I was careful to do that before you came, ’ I replied. ‘ You see, I am not rude this morning. I should be very sorry to spoil your work. ’

‘ Do you think my amusement deserves so much consideration ? ’ she asked, in a somewhat sarcastic tone.

‘ I would not willingly spoil your amusement ; but I spoke of your work. ’

‘ And that—— ? ’ she asked, trying to look unconcerned.

‘ You want me to tell you what I think of it, ’ said I, approaching her.

‘ Oh, I know all that I did yesterday was bad. ’

‘ My presence distracted you. ’

‘ Yes, I think it did. But the rest of the work ? ’

She stood aside that I might look at it. I wondered what had been passing in her mind to make her this morning so much more gracious than she had been yesterday. I looked at the picture carefully, and with the same astonishment that I had felt in looking at it previously. It was a mixture of good and bad.

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘I saw the best part of this yesterday.’

‘Can you suggest any improvements?’

‘No. I think it is impossible to improve this work.’

She misunderstood my meaning, for she said cheerfully, and yet with some hesitation:

‘Then you think it is—is—is all right?’

‘No, indeed; that I do not.’

This unexpected announcement stung Miss Adams’s pride at once.

‘Perhaps you may be able to point out the defects,’ said she, again with a touch of sarcasm in her tone.

‘Yes, I can,’ said I. ‘The colouring is not all right, and the drawing is wrong, and there is no idea at all in the picture.’

This wholesale condemnation seemed to take away her breath for a moment.

‘To begin with,’ said she presently, ‘where is the drawing faulty.’

‘Here, and here,’ said I, pointing with my clayey tool to several parts where the perspective was at fault. ‘I should say that you had changed your point of view ; and that you painted this part of the thing three or four yards from that.’

‘That nasty pillar came in the way,’ said the girl, pouting.

‘It doesn’t look as if it were in the habit of moving about,’ said I, with a laugh. ‘I never saw a column come in anyone’s way

yet awhile. You mean that you began work in the wrong place.'

'I don't think ordinary people would perceive that,' she remonstrated.

'If you paint down to ordinary perceptions your work will always be faulty.'

The young lady drew a deep sigh. Then, after a moment's silence—

'And the colouring?' she asked.

'You painted these lights on a sunny morning, and those on a cloudy day.'

'I am not conscious of having done so, and I tried to make the colours match.'

'But they would not be matched. It is not like trimming a bonnet when you sit down in the sacred cause of Art to depict the effects of Nature.'

The girl hung her head in silence. Then there came a rebellious look into her face, as if she found my criticism unkind and harsh, and were determined to dispense with my

judgment since I could find no good in what she did, and could give her no encouragement to do better. I could see that she did not care to receive rebuke, and perhaps none but a man who knew the mischief of false and indiscriminating praise, and who thought more of her good than his own gratification, could have found it in his heart to make so sweet a face look sad when to fill it with smiles was so easy. I did not wish her to think that I had found fault from a morose feeling; that would have undone any good that criticism could do.

‘The errors here arise from want of thought, from youthfulness, maybe from your happiness even,’ said I.

‘My happiness!’ she exclaimed. ‘What has that to do with painting the aisle of a church?’

‘Much. Sorrow makes poets, and only poets can paint pictures—except such as

will satisfy the limited taste of "ordinary people." All these defects in drawing and colouring arise from your starting without a fixed idea. You walk into this aisle, and you say, "Oh, how pretty ! This will make a nice picture ;" and after a time you produce something which in one respect has not the merit of an architect's hard design—for that at least is true. Now, I'll tell you how it seems to me a poet and an artist would proceed. His heart, we will say, is filled with melancholy, and upon his imagination comes the vision of an aisle, grey and cold, and sad in tone, with perhaps a ray of light streaming through an open door, casting long shadows to tell of a dying day, and increase the pathos of the thing. And having conceived a grand picture, he makes this aisle his model, by which to work out his conception. But he fixes the point of view whence his idea may be realized, and he is

careful to choose a time when the light is in harmony with his subject. A column will not get in the way of this man, and he will be conscious whether the sky be clouded or not.'

There was not a gleam of hope in the poor child's face. She toyed with a brush in her hand awhile ; then she asked, with a little quaver in her voice, what she should do with the picture.

'Cut it up,' said I.

She kept her eyes down, and I saw a tear start from her eye.

'I might as well give it to Mrs. Blight,' said she.

'Worthy as the amiable Martha is, I could not advise you to be so generous. No, cut it up and keep it. There are a dozen pieces of excellent work here—most excellent. Keep them as studies. Only give Martha the coloured portion that you tried to

match. This column with the light from the stained window struck me with astonishment the first moment I looked on your work—'tis good indeed ; and the drawing here is quite admirable.'

I spoke with perfect candour, for as I pointed to the different bits I found them worthy of all or perhaps more than I said in their praise. Miss Adams answered not a word. Still looking at the picture, I said :

‘ I have discouraged you.’

‘ Oh no, no, no ! ’ she cried. ‘ I am very grateful for your discriminating criticism.’ Her face was radiant with delight when I looked at it, though the lashes of her eyes were yet wet. ‘ All your remarks are true, quite true.’

‘ Especially the favourable ones, hey ? ’ said I, with a laugh.

‘ No ; I think I like your censure as well as your praise, now. ’Tis that which makes

the praise of value. 'Twill please me to cut up the picture as you suggest.'

'And so your work here ends,' said I, with a feeling of regret to think I should lose the sight of her pretty face.

She stood listless for awhile, reflecting on what I had said probably; then she said :

'You think I am too happy to feel the poetry of sadness—you think I am—I am only a child?'

'You are a child, and happily not a precocious one. Your field of poetry lies outside these walls. The brighter side of nature you could depict, imparting to the picture all the joyful sunlight of a child's nature—at least so I think as I look at you; the sadder side you may leave to those who have suffered disappointment.'

I think she took my words to refer to my own past troubles, for her eyes filled at once with a tender sympathy, and she asked :

‘Must one experience disappointments to know what sadness is?’

I looked into her face as I had looked into her picture, to discern the inner meaning of its expression.

‘All good and beautiful natures are capable of sympathy with suffering; but the sentiment is transient. Only our own sorrows endure. Little as I have watched your face, I have seen in it the grave and gay thoughts chasing each other like the lights and shadows over the meadows on a day like this. Deeper feelings will come soon enough, ’tis but the spring-tide of your life at present. And now to my work.’

I left her, and went back to my plaster, with the strangest aching in my heart, for I could not account to myself for the pain I felt. True, the experience of the past six or seven years had been of continued struggles and thwarted hopes, and they had

taken away my gaiety and made me old before my time; yet had I nothing to regret in being a thoughtful and sober workman rather than a frivolous and careless trifler.

The plaster was dry enough, so I oiled it thoroughly, and then took out a couple of handfuls of plaster and put in my pan to mix. Whilst I was doing this, Miss Adams came to my side. I had purposely kept my eyes from her, I know not why; and now, as I raised my eyes, I found she had put on her bonnet and her gloves and was ready to go. She hesitated before speaking. I was afraid she was about to thank me for speaking my mind about her picture, or to say some commonplace civility about the possibility of seeing me again one of these days. But she did nothing of the kind. She looked me full in the face, and I saw in her large sweet truthful eyes a soul that was above conventional pretences.

‘Good-bye,’ she said, and no more.

She held out her gloved hand frankly. I took it in mine, which was all covered with plaster.

‘Good-bye!’ said I. ‘Good-bye, you beautiful child.’

I was seized with such a rapture at that moment that it is surprising I said or did nothing more foolish. Our hands parted, and she walked away with a dreamy astonishment in her face, as if a new life had suddenly been revealed to her senses. I watched her retreating figure till she passed through the door, and my eyes still rested where they had last seen her, until a light laugh beyond broke the spell. ‘She has forgotten me already,’ thought I.

It was less easy for me to forget. I felt towards this young girl as I have felt, though in a minor degree, towards an unfinished model which promised, with proper

treatment, to realize my highest ideal of beauty, with the same eager desire to mould and form her to my conception; and the regret which I might have experienced had my model been destroyed by accident, and with it all my hopes of making a thing of perfect beauty, I felt as I realized that it was not for me to watch with growing delight the development of that young soul to a lovely maturity.

I went on with my work in a mechanical fashion, and scarcely noticed the sexton's wife when she came to fetch Miss Adams's undressed palette, her colours, and her easel, though I knew the good woman spoke to me. Later on Mrs. Blight came up the aisle again, curious, no doubt, to know why Miss Adams had left so suddenly.

'I suppose you've been making of a dust or something,' says she; 'for though, to be sure, Miss Adams says you ain't misbehaved

yourself, I can't think but what you're to blame for her going away all of a suddint, and looking so down-hearted, when 'twas not an hour ago she arrived in such gay spirits. There was something or other on her mind, I know, for all her pretending to laugh; and if you've been the cause of her losing heart, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.'

I had no heart to skirmish with the woman, so she talked on without interruption until she was tired; and then, thank God! she left me to myself.

When I left off work to eat my dinner, I unwittingly strolled to the spot where Miss Adams had been painting, and upon the ground I discovered a paint-brush which Mrs. Blight must have let fall in removing the things. Had it been the greatest treasure in the world I could not have picked it up more eagerly or guarded it more carefully. I

reckoned that it would enable me to see the young lady again, and I resolved that when my day's work was finished I would carry it up to my old home, and give it to her. For a while this silly project kept me in a flutter, and I speculated on what might result from the visit with a puerile folly of which I was heartily ashamed when I came to reason coolly on the subject, and to consider what would be the probable outcome of yielding to my sentimental impulse. I began to see that it was not entirely an artistic feeling that made Miss Adams so interesting to me ; and when this fact was realized, it needed but little reasoning to convince me that it would be wrong to do anything which might, by the remotest chance, lead Miss Adams to participate in my extravagant passion.

I was so agitated and unsettled that I would not attempt to do anything beyond

the simply mechanical part of my work that day; and when this was done, I left the church and crossed the road to the sexton's house, where I found Mrs. Blight under the porch, sitting with a lapful of her good-man's stockings which she was darning.

I gave her the brush, told her where I had found it, and begged she would take it to Miss Adams without delay.

‘That I will,’ says she, ‘for I like to give every man his due, whatever be his faults. ’Tis honest of you to return it, and more so than I should have given you credit for; and so be sure I will take it up to the young gentlewoman at once, that she may not think otherways of you; for I love honesty as I love my bread, and I will confess I am heartily glad to find myself mistaken in your character, though Mr. Chives do nothing but say what a famous work-man you are. And to show you the same,

come along with me this minute.' She led the way through the house, and pausing at the door leading into her garden—'There,' says she, 'this door-step's that sank that the water comes in the house when it rains hard, and I've had it in my mind to let Mr. Chives see to it these six months; hows'ever, for your honesty, I'll give the job to you, providing you don't charge ex-orbirant, and sweep up your mess when you've done.'

It was a mason's job, and I saw no reason to refuse doing it; so I undertook to make the step good for a shilling, and sweep the place up tidily when it was done.

She declared herself very well satisfied with my terms, and promised to recommend me to her friends; adding that there was never a good workman but what was bad-tempered or 'imperant,' and that, for her

part, she preferred a hasty word to a sour look any day.

‘As for the painting-brush,’ says she, in conclusion, ‘I will take it immediate to the Old Hall, and I’ll tell Miss Adams who found it; and I warrant she won’t let you be a loser by your honesty, and as like as not will put another shilling on top of mine for the doorstep.’

I wondered how Miss Adams would like to hear these eulogies.





## CHAPTER V.

OF MR. ADAMS, AND HOW FALKLAND CAME  
TO REVISIT HIS OLD HOME.

**T**O dissipate the fancies which had taken so strong a hold upon my imagination, and to clear my mind for the work of the morrow, I resolved that I would not so much as look at the medallion of Miss Adams that evening; and, having need of a finer chisel than I could find amongst the tools of handy Joe, I walked to Maidstone, where I bought a fairly good tool, returned to the inn, and then, tired with my fourteen-mile walk, I fell asleep the moment I got into bed, and

slept without dreaming until the morning.

I was up betimes, and repaired at once to the church. The sexton's wife paid me a visit in the morning, and, after saluting me very civilly, told me with some indignation that Miss Adams had sent me nothing for finding her paint-brush—though she admitted that she prized it above all others, and had felt so concerned for its loss that she intended inquiring for it herself—and notwithstanding that she, Mrs. Blight, had broadly hinted to her that workmen always expect to be rewarded for their honesty.

‘Hows’ever,’ says she, ‘I think I know what’s right, though I’m not the richest in the parish; and there’s an old coat—and not so old neither, come to that—as is as good as any shilling as was ever minted, and you shall have it before you go away—that you shall.’

No one else came to interrupt me, and I worked with such expedition and success that the restoration was completed by three o'clock in the afternoon, even to the staining of the new part in keeping with the old. I was well satisfied with the effect, and Chives, arriving a little later, was so delighted with my performance, that he pulled out his purse and paid me my five guineas on the spot, though he could not help fetching a sigh or two as he weighed the purse in his hand afterwards and returned it to his pocket. Indeed, it seemed to me a little cruel to take such a sum for so small a piece of work, especially when I reflected that Master Tommy and perhaps the handy Joe would have to suffer for it; but my necessity would not allow me to be very punctilious in the matter, for without money I should be compelled to accept any kind of work I could get in London, and

might for a long time have to live from hand to mouth, without any chance of bettering my position; whereas, having a few guineas to furnish me with the necessities of life, I could afford to give some weeks to finding an engagement in which I could employ my abilities to the best advantage. I was anxious to get to London without delay; but there was one pleasure which I could not deny myself before leaving Maplehurst, and that was the casting of my medallion.

Leaving Mr. Chives in the church, I went to the sexton's, and spent an hour in repairing his doorstep; after which I returned to the inn. I found a very handsome chariot, with a pair of splendid horses, standing before the door there, and, on entering the house, perceived that my landlady was entertaining a visitor in her private parlour behind the bar.

‘Ah, here he is!’ cried she, catching sight

of me and rising from her seat. ‘Step inside here, if you please,’ added she, stepping into the bar, ‘there’s Mr. Adams from Adams’s Hall wants to speak to you.’

I own that this announcement caused my heart to flutter considerably, and, as I entered the parlour, wondering what Miss Adams’s father could have to say to me, I looked at him with great interest.

It was impossible for a man to be more unlike my preconceived idea of Mr. Adams than the gentleman I saw ; for I had fancied him to be a spare, delicate person, with features bearing some resemblance to his daughter’s, at least in their expression of refined and cultured feelings ; whereas I found him a gaunt, ungainly man, with a face which had no claim either to physical or intellectual beauty. His colourless skin was slightly pitted with the small-pox ; his mouth was large ; his nose was long and ill-

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shaped ; and his eyebrows, which were exceedingly thick and jet-black, had that peculiarity which is commonly supposed to be the characteristic of a villain—they met. Nor did his dress belie the expression of his commonplace cast of features by any notable instance of good taste ; for though his clothes were doubtless of the very richest material and best make that money could procure, they were as ill-suited to him as the plumage of a bird of paradise would be upon the awkward body of a goose. His appearance reminded me of the ridiculous figure which is sometimes presented on the stage, when a manager, for lack of means, makes shift to dress his carpenter or scene-shifter in tinsel and velvet, and sends him on to represent a prince or a duke. From his wig to his shoes, Mr. Adams was over-dressed. There was too much fine lace on his ruffles and jabot, too many diamonds on his fingers, in his

brooches, and in the watches and seals that dangled from his fob. It was a figure to delight a cynic, for he all unconsciously burlesqued the fashion of the day.

‘How d’ye do, sir?’ said he, extending his hand and smiling with an expression of frank good-humour that made his plain face pleasant to look at. ‘Rare good weather for the hay crops, ain’t it?’

‘Good weather for everything,’ said I, catching the geniality of his tone.

‘Why, so it is, to be sure. Lord! how the young peas are coming on! If the slugs and the sparrows will only let ’em alone for a fortnight or three weeks, there’ll be a plenty, I’ll warrant. But that’s not what I have come here to talk about. May I make so bold as to ask you, sir, if you have anything particular to do this evening?’

‘Nothing that cannot as well be done to-morrow morning.’

‘Then, in that case, would you mind coming to Adams’s Hall with me?’

Doubtless my face expressed the astonishment I felt upon receiving this strange invitation, for he hastened to explain that he wished to have my professional advice concerning some alterations he was about to make in his house.

‘My architect and me,’ says he, ‘has agreed to what should be done; but my daughter, Delia, will have it we’re wrong, and that I ought to get the opinion of an artist before I have the old house pulled about; and likewise she would have me come down to find you out, being mighty certain that you are no simple mason, but a real artist.’

‘Aye, that he is!’ cries the landlady, with a wink at me by way of encouragement. ‘As you will say, sir, when you see the piece of work he did t’other night. Run upstairs,

young man, and fetch it down for the gentleman to look at. It is a portrait of your young lady, sir, and prodigious like, to be sure, which this young man made of a piece of clay all out of his own head.'

'Did he though?' says Mr. Adams. 'Well, the parson tells us we're nought but clay, but it is not every man could use his head to such a useful purpose.'

He laughed very heartily at his own joke, and the landlady joined him, though without exactly catching the drift of his words; but it was her business, good soul, to laugh at her customers' jokes whether she understood them or not.

I ran up to my room and fetched the medallion, which Mr. Adams no sooner cast his eyes upon than he burst into loud exclamations of approval and astonishment.

'Tis my own dear Delia to the very life!' cries he. 'Dash my wig, but 'tis marvellous

to think that a bit of brown clay could be made to look so beautiful ! 'Tis prodigious ! Tut, tut ! Clay, as I live ! There's the pretty lips of her, and the round chin, and her sweet delicate cheeks. Heart alive ! it needs but the eyes to be perfect. A bit of stiff clay as you couldn't grow a carrot in—well, well ! 'Tis a better portrait than ever was took, and I've had a mortal lot done, too. But most of these artists make her mouth smaller and her eyes larger than what they are, and 'tisn't possible to alter the real look of her face without spoiling of it. Why, how came you to do it, sir ? She told me nothing of sittings, which most artists make so much fuss about.'

'Miss Adams knows nothing about it,' said I. 'Tis done from memory. Hers is a face not easily forgotten.'

'That is true, sir. Be the girl out of my sight, her image is in my mind ; and the

longer she is absent, the more distinctly it stands before me. 'Tis a wonderful face, is it not, sir ?

‘ 'Tis very beautiful.’

‘ Aye, but not a bit lovelier than she deserves. You’ll find a many good plants with very ordinary blooms, and a many fine blooms on a mean sort of plant ; but with Delia ’tis otherwise. Body and soul she is lovely. She has the best heart in the world, sir ; and so she had when her ways were a little wild and capricious. But she’s less headstrong now she’s took to painting and the like ; and if she’s a bit wilful one moment, she makes up for it the next by being doubly lovable. But, Lord, why need I praise her ? her nature is in her face for e’er a one to read as has eyes in his head. You saw what she was when you did this, sir.’ He looked at it in silence a moment or two ; then, with some hesitation, he said : ‘ I

suppose, now, you have no idea of selling this, as one might say.'

I told him I had no intention of selling it.

'You're in the right, sir,' says he. 'If I had it, no money should buy it ; and I'll not insult you by offering money for it.'

'As it is,' said I, ''tis liable to crack in drying, and would crumble in the course of time ; but I intend to cast it, and you shall have a copy, and welcome, since it pleases you so much.'

He expressed his gratification, and shook me heartily by the hand ; after which he repeated his proposal that I should advise him as to the alterations in Adams's Hall. I promised to be at the house in an hour's time, for, proud as I might have been at another time of my workman's dress, I was reluctant to present myself to Miss Adams before I had changed my smock for a decent coat and waistcoat. Mr. Adams would have

sent a coach to fetch me, but I assured him that I knew the house and preferred to walk. As I know now, he himself would rather have walked across the smooth meadows than be jolted over the rough road in a coach ; but he considered it as unbecoming to his position to go a hundred yards beyond his estate without engaging the services of two horses and a couple of stout servants.

I blacked my shoes carefully, and brushed my clothes, which were of good make and material and still presentable, though now ten years old ; but I had worn them in Italy only on fête days, and, except that they were a little faded and threadbare in parts, they were as good as ever they had been. And when, having combed my hair and tied it with a fair riband, I came to survey myself in a hand-glass, I was sufficiently satisfied with my appearance.

It was not without considerable agitation in my heart that I entered by the gates and approached the house which had been my home for so many years ; but I own that my mind was less concerned with the retrospect than with the immediate prospect of seeing Miss Adams. She was walking with her father on the bowling-green, which lay upon the north side of the house and near the entrance ; and I question if either of them recognised me at the first moment, for they had seen me in my smock and white with the dust from my work. But as I approached them, taking off my hat with the best grace I could muster, Mr. Adams cried : ‘Od’s butterkins, ’tis our gentleman artist !’ and stepped forward to meet me.

Miss Adams gave me her hand with frank cordiality, and said something which I cannot for the life of me remember ; and I replied in words which I am quite sure were

worthy only to be forgotten. She wore a coquettish garden-hat trimmed with pink and turned up on one side, and this set off her creamy skin and dark hair to perfection. Her face was prettily tinged with colour, which may have been reflected from the silk lining of her hat, or have come there from her heart. The sleeves of her dress were short, and revealed arms the whitest and most beautifully modelled that I ever saw in nature. Her neck was covered with a fine handkerchief, and a little bouquet of lilies was fastened upon her bosom. The train of her gown swept the lawn, and gave additional height to her graceful figure.

She knew that she was beautiful, and she knew that my eyes were admiring her, and a little look of gratified pride came into her face, such as one might expect to see in the countenance of a young queen receiving the homage of her subject. It was not in the

least like the expression I had seen upon her face before—the contemptuous pride with which she had coldly stared at me after overhearing me ridicule her pretence to art.

We both played different parts in each other's eyes. To her, I was no longer merely a mason; to me, she was no longer merely an aspiring young artist. That may account for the vastly different behaviour which I exhibited on these two occasions.

We went round to the terrace in the front of the house, where Mr. Adams pointed out the alterations proposed by his architect.

‘He’s for having all those bay-windows took out,’ said Mr. Adams, with a sweep of his hand, ‘and that three-cornered sort of buttress with the little door on the basement, that’s to be took out too. Then those three curly edged gables are to be cut

off, and the chimneys took down. Then he's going to fill up all the corners, and make everything nice and square. Likewise he will make the windows square and regular, and glaze them with the best crown glass. Then he's going to cut a fine door in the centre with a portico in front, supported by massive Doric pillars, or Corinthian, if preferred. Then he's going to cover the whole face of the house with cement, so as to make it look like stone. When that's all done, this silly grass is to be covered with beautiful slabs of marble all along the terrace; and there's to be a marble balustrade the whole length, with a flight of marble steps leading down to a fountain that's to be stuck in the middle of the lawn. Then there's to be a row of statues along the terrace—that's something in your line, you know. Then—well, I think that's about all for this side of the house.

Now, sir, tell me, don't you think that will be mighty fine ?'

'To speak candidly, sir,' said I, 'twill be, in my opinion, prodigiously ugly.'

'That is what I think,' said Miss Adams. 'I like the bay-windows, and the quaint gables and chimneys, and the red bricks.'

'But, my dear,' expostulated Mr. Adams, 'tis in the Jacobin style, I am told, which is nought but a mixture of Gothics and Tudors, and I know not what ; whereas altered 'twill be, the fellow tells me, pure Greek, which is all the fashion now amongst folks of good taste. To be sure, your taste must have changed for the worse, for when we were in Greece nothing would content you but to be drawing some broken-down church or shattered pillar and you was for ever trying to make me understand how noble and beautiful they were. I do assure you, sir,' he said, turning

to me, 'there are a dozen books full of such drawings as she took in Greece, and Rome, and Italy, and Athens, and those out-of-the-way parts where we have been a-travelling these last two years. Why, my dear,' addressing his daughter, 'surely you know that everything must be good that's Greek. Do you think they would build museums for a parcel of rubbish if it wasn't Greek? You, sir,' turning away from his daughter to me—'you ought to know what's what, and you admire the Greek style of building?'

'Yes,' said I, 'in Greece;' and I then proceeded to point out my reasons for considering that style of architecture unsuitable to the Weald of Kent.

He listened very patiently, and then said :

'To be sure, what you say about our climate, the surrounding country and all

that, is true enough, and I quite agree with you that a house of false stone is as contemptible as trinkets of false metal and false gems ; and I shan't hold out for the Greek style, especially as my Delia here seems to hate it fully as much as you do. But still, a man with a lot of money is bound to spend it, and he can't expect people to respect him if he lives in a house just as he finds it, and puts up with what he can get, like a man with no money at all. I *do not* want people to laugh at me, you know,' he added with much emphasis. 'When they come to see me I want 'em to find something that will please 'em. I want 'em to enjoy 'emselves and be nice and pleasant and amiable, which could not be if they was continually seeing something to find fault with. That's why I jumped so readily at Delia's suggestion that we should have the advice of an artist, for you must certainly

understand these things ten thousand times better than I can pretend to do. And now that the architect's notion is not to be carried out, I shall take it as a very great favour, sir, if you will undertake to superintend the alterations, and see 'em carried out according to your notions of what's right and proper. Money is no object,' he dropped his voice to a confidential murmur. 'Ten, fifteen, twenty thousand pounds I am quite willing to spend on this matter, and I need not say that whatever your fee may come to, it will be discharged without question asked. You can begin when you like: me and my daughter are only waiting here until the arrangement is made, and then we shall go to London—I have taken a house in Park Lane—and there we shall put up during the summer with the hope of coming here for a breath of fresh air towards the

autumn, if you think you can get all done by that time.'

I was so astounded by this proposal that I stood in silence until he recalled me to myself.

'Well, sir, what do you say?' he asked.

'I shall be most happy to be of service to you,' I began.

'I thank you with all my heart, sir,' he cried. 'And now, sir, tell me what alterations you will make. I warrant you'll put t'other man in the shade.'

I looked up at the beautiful house that I loved so well, at the terrace, and the lawn, and then I said:

'If you take my advice, sir, you will not have a brick of that house touched.'

'What! no alteration of the house?' he cried, in amazement.

'None, sir; 'tis pretty, and appropriate to the surroundings, and it fulfils your re-

quirements ; for here is nothing to excite ridicule, and nothing wanting to gratify the tastes of those whose tastes are worthy of consideration.'

' But the terrace, and the balustrades with the statues—you don't object to them? Statues, you know, are something in your way—statues, marble statues.'

' No, sir. They would be out of keeping with the house, and nothing is more pleasant to walk upon than this short turf. You might have a fountain in the lawn, if it is fashioned in keeping with the house, and a balustrade in place of the hedge at the bottom of the garden might be added—a broad running ledge just high enough to sit upon in an idle moment when the country tempts one to linger and look at it; but have no statues. That is all that I can advise, and your architect, whose business it is to please his customers, will carry out these sugges-

tions better than I can ; for I have not studied the subject.'

Miss Adams said nothing, but I saw that she approved of my advice ; as for her father, this sudden check to his spending twenty thousand pounds seemed to be a most bitter disappointment to him ; his long visage was ludicrous in its rueful expression.

'Twill cost no more than six or eight hundred pounds,' said he, in a tone of dejection. 'I beg you, sir, to come within doors and see if no alteration can be made there.'

We passed through the doorway and entered the vestibule by the great staircase. Here he paused, and looking up, asked me what I thought of the stairs ; to which I replied that I thought it the most beautiful staircase that I had ever seen in a dwelling-house ; which, indeed, was no exaggeration,

for the banisters are most excellently carved.

‘But,’ says he, ‘’tis only wood, and never a coat of paint upon it. What say you to having ’em gilt?—everyone admires gold.’

‘Not everyone,’ said I. ‘Miss Adams, I take it, would prefer to see the fine oak rather than a garish display of metal leaf.’

Miss Adams readily coincided, and we passed from the vestibule to the drawing-room, where he would have had the dark panels torn away, and a gay paper hung. And thence we went from room to room, with no better result as far as his wishes were concerned; for I would agree to no alteration, and Miss Adams supported all that I said in favour of leaving the house in its present condition.

‘I perceive,’ said he, when we came to the end of the inspection, ‘that ’tis beyond my capacity to understand the ins and outs

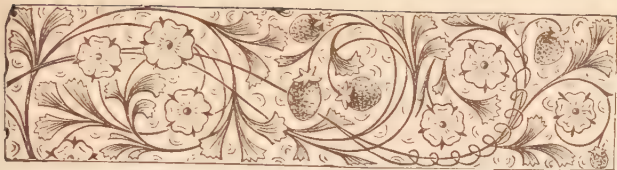
of this matter, and that, left to my own guidance, I should quickly make my house the laughing-stock of all who saw it. I thank you heartily, sir, for your advice, which has saved me doubtless from a great deal of mortification in the future, but which places me in a very awkward predicament at present. For, you see, I hoped to offer you a piece of work that should be worth accepting, and it turns out that I've brought you here on a fool's errand, as one may say.'

I assured him that I was well repaid for my trouble by the pleasure of doing him a service, and was bethinking myself how to retire, when a servant came and announced that dinner was served, whereupon Mr. Adams asked me to take a seat at his table. The poor man seemed so earnestly to desire that I should accept his hospitality as some sort of recompense for my services, that had

I felt less disposed to linger in my old home and in the society of Miss Adams, I could not have refused his invitation.

I offered my arm to Miss Adams, which she took with a graceful movement of her pretty head, and I led her into the dining-room without the slightest feeling of embarrassment; for though it was sometimes necessary for me to recollect that I was a poor mason, I never forgot that I was by birth and education a gentleman.





## CHAPTER VI.

MR. ADAMS REVEALS HIS DAUGHTER'S  
CHARACTER AND SOMETHING OF HIS OWN.

**A** VERY prim, straight, white-haired old gentlewoman was seated at the table. She rose from her chair and made a deep courtesy at our entrance. She was, I found, a kind of governess and companion to Miss Adams, and had occupied that position since the time of the young lady leaving boarding-school. Miss Adams introduced me.

‘Miss Dobson,’ said she, ‘Mr.——’

‘Falkland,’ said I.

‘Falkland!’ cried Mr. Adams. ‘Well,

now, that is prodigious odd, to be sure ; for I must tell you, sir, that the last residents in this house were of that name. Indeed, the house was called after 'em, Falkland Hall, till I bought it, when I thought I might as well give it my own name ; so I called it Adams's Hall. My Delia and Miss Dobson will have it that I should say " Adams' Hall " ; but, as I tell them, if I call it that, people will think my name's Adam, and that will give rise to all manner of jokes. Folks are so fond of poking fun at me.'

He paused, tapped the table with the handle of the carving-knife to command attention, said a grace with much solemnity, and then, continuing his observations upon the necessity of guarding himself against ridicule, which he appeared to fear greatly, he proceeded, standing, to carve the sirloin.

The conversation turned upon the travels

which they had just completed, and upon the works of art they had seen in Italy. Miss Adams admitted that most of the paintings had disappointed her.

‘I expected,’ said she, ‘that the pictures would strike me at once with the beauty of their form and colour; but in most cases I found drawing which seemed to me faulty, and colouring which seemed to me extravagant. Of course, that was my fault. I believe that, if I had looked at them with the knowledge that they were the expression of a sublime idea, I should have found a great deal to admire.’

It struck me that this observation resulted from our conversation in the church, and her subsequent reflections upon it.

‘I don’t know much about these matters, to be sure,’ said Mr. Adams; ‘but I counted twenty-two Holy Families on one wall of a church, and hang me if there was two of

'em alike ; so you can't say those old artists was partic'ly good at portraits, can you ? Right in the midst of these sacred people, sir, was a portrait of Venus, who, as I am told, was a remarkably handsome young woman in her time. Well, I don't know how she might have looked when she was properly dressed ; for in the picture, I assure you, sir, she had nothing on but a necklace and a hat with a feather in it, which——'

' Pardon me for interrupting you, Mr. Adams,' said Miss Dobson severely, 'but may I trouble you for a little gravy ?'

'To be sure, ma'am. Mr. Falkland, how are you doing ? Delia, my dear, you're not hearty to-day. A little bit down here ? Well, as I was saying, Mr. Falkland, those old fellows couldn't paint anything but portraits, as far as I could see, and couldn't do them well ; and I wouldn't give one of my daughter's little paintings not

for ten hundred thousand of these Italian things.'

When the port was put on the table, Miss Dobson rose with a significant glance at Miss Adams, who at once followed her example. The elder lady went to the door and made a profound courtesy ; the younger, standing by the table, nodded playfully to her father, and made me a bow with a bewitching smile in her face, that seemed to say, ' We shall meet again presently,' and the two left the room.

Mr. Adams followed his daughter with his eyes until the door shut her from his view, and then, turning to me, he said in a tender tone :

' It does my heart good to see her. She has the carriage of a princess, and as for looks, is there e'er a Venus going can compare with her ?'

' No,' said I, catching his enthusiasm.

And, faith, I meant what I said ; for Miss Adams had, mingled with her archness and beauty, an innocency and purity which Venus never knew.

‘ If you could put yourself in my place, sir,’ said Mr. Adams, leaning back in his chair, ‘ you would experience a most wonderful feeling of joy in seeing that young girl growing every day more beautiful in body and soul. I have had a good bit of anxiety about her, but now I feel like a mariner who has taken his craft through many dangerous shoals and perilous passages, and brought her into a fair, smooth anchorage, as one may say. I thought at one time of bringing her up in a simple country fashion, but I came to see that what suited me wouldn’t suit her. Fond of young things, like rabbits and chicken and kitten and the like, she was, to be sure ; but they wasn’t enough for her. She was for ever running out of

bounds, and losing herself in the lanes, looking about for she knew not what, but something more than she could find in the house and garden—striking up friendships with all the children she met, no matter of what sort, and venturing in places where she was forbidden to go. Folks who had child'en, and knew how to keep 'em in order, said I was sp'iling her, and that she needed strict management. So I sent her to school—right away from me. It was a bitter struggle that, I do assure you, sir. The school-teacher was told to be strict with her, and did no more than her duty ; but Delia couldn't brook harsh treatment, and the long and short of it is, that, one night in November, as I sat in my kitchen wondrous lonesome, with an empty pipe and a family Bible, I heard a knock and a little whining cry at the door, and, on opening it, there I found the child, half dead with

hunger and fatigue and fright, she having leapt out of a window in the early morning and run away from school, and walked a distance of sixteen miles without touching a morsel of food, and lost her way more than once. They had put a dunce's cap on her head the day before, and stood her on a stool for the children to laugh at, and that so wrought upon her sensitive feelings that she could not sleep a wink the whole night for thinking of her shame. She told me she would throw herself out of window if I sent her back there again. There was no fear of that. I put her to another school though—for I always did see the importance of education, sir, from my own want of it—and I bade the good woman to treat the child kindly, which she did; and, in gratitude, the little one took to studying with all her might and main, and got on wonderful. That sort of opened my eyes, as you may

say. I came to see that a'most half the mischief in the world arises from forcing others to do what is contrary to their dispositions and a'most the other half from our trying to get what is denied to us ; and the truth of this I am more certain of every day I live ; for, to be sure, sir, if we get all we want, there's no temptation to do wrong.'

I could not help smiling at the simplicity of Mr. Adams's logic ; but, not noticing me, he continued :

'So when she came home to spend her birthday with me—she was then fifteen—I took a favourable opportunity and sounded her inclinations. We were sitting, as I remember, in the summer-house at the bottom of the garden, with the flower-borders running down each side of the path all as bright as a poppet-show, and the peas just coming into flower, and as fresh and healthy as may be, and all the garden looking wonderful wholesome and

sweet. I had been smoking my evening pipe, and she, a bit tired with running about all day, had seated herself alongside me with her hand under my arm, and her pretty little head resting just there on my shoulder. I can never forget that moment, sir, as long as I live, nor the dreamy look in her sweet eyes as she looked out at the distant hills where the sun had sunk ; and I told her how I hoped she would grow up a good and happy woman, and I asked her plump what sort of life she would like to lead. She wasn't a bit surprised by my question. She had grown a deal in the last year, and she was thinking about the very same thing at the moment, I fancy. She just pressed my arm a little, but said nothing ; so says I, "Would you like to live always in the country, pretty ?" She gave her head a little shake, and said she didn't think she could be happy to live always in the country ;

she didn't care for needlework, nor for making puddings, and the neighbours were all so stupid and bound up in their own affairs of killing pigs and sending cows to market that they seemed to live only for their cows and pigs, which is true enough. She thought she should like to go about in a show—you must understand, sir, she was young, and had never seen anything better than a fair in the way of amusements—or else she should like to play very beautifully on the harp, or else paint pictures like that I had bought of the gent who did the signboard of the Setting Sun ; at any rate, she must do something to occupy her thoughts, and keep her striving to do something quite well. She knew, she said, she shouldn't like to be poor, and have to put up with mean things and mean people.

‘ Well, sir, I pointed out to her that folks who go about in shows are generally

poor and mean also ; but I took care not to wound the child's feelings by laughing at her notion ; and then I promised that she should have the best masters for music and painting that money could get, and that whichever occupation upon trial she found most to her tastes she should follow. But Lord, sir,' cried Mr. Adams, suddenly abashed, 'all this rigmarole can have no interest for you.'

'Indeed it has,' said I ; 'pray continue.'

'Well, sir, in the next year the child grew to be a woman, as one may say ; and, as I take it, the chief cause was a wonderful gift for painting as she was found to have. She threw herself into the study heart and soul, setting all else aside for it. When she came home at the half-year, and I saw how desperate she was for being a painter, I made up my mind, once for all, as to the future ; and when the year was finished, I found a

suitable companion for her, Miss Dobson—and a regular gentlewoman she is, I assure you, with mighty fine notions of the proprieties—and we went abroad, all three, after I had bid farewell to my old friends at Cheshunt and taken a last look at my garden. For you see, sir, I had made up my mind to give up the old simple life I had been indulging in.'

'That was a sore trial for you, I take it.'

'To be sure, sir, it was a bit of a hardship at the time. I had lived there in content for a matter of eight or nine years, and got kind of well rooted in, as you may say. My garden was the admiration of everyone as saw it ; my house had all I wanted for myself and any friend who chanced to drop in, and I was looked up to by the entire parish. They made me a vestryman, sir—fifty-nine votes against thirteen—and then a churchwarden ; and I was treated with the greatest respect possible,

not only by the ratepayers, but by the parson and the squire too. Nothing was done without asking my advice, and they always came to me first when there was a subscription to be made.' Mr. Adams drew himself up in his chair, and his countenance glowed with becoming pride as he recounted this part of his history. 'I had the honour of putting a new spire to the church when the old one was knocked over by lightning, and I was permitted to make a new road which bears my name at this very moment. I've seen my name in print, sir, in letters as long as my finger. When I spoke in the vestry, no one opposed me by a single word. You may say, sir, that this is pride. Well, I will not deny it; and I will own that I did feel down-hearted a bit in giving of it all up; especially when I found myself in a foreign land where no one would understand a word I said, and my own countrymen laughed at

me. And then, you know, for a man who's been used to sitting in his shirt-sleeves with a clay pipe, when he had nothing much to do, pitching a quoit, or having a friendly bout of skittles of an evening, and doing a couple of hours' digging before breakfast, 'tis mighty unpleasant to be always wearing a fine coat ; and doing nothing from morn till night makes one wondrous heavy and dull, especially after dinner. However, that's nothing. I shall get to like it heartily after a bit, I warrant. The main thing is to do my duty by the girl, and keep her from wanting anything she can't get ; for was she not content and happy, you may be sure, sir, that not all the honours in the world, nor all the gardens and clay pipes could make me so. Ad's my life ! have I cause to repine a single moment when I see her as she is now—beautiful, and good, and happy ?' He was silent for a moment ; and then, ' 'Tis a terrible thing, sir,

said he, ‘ when a young woman ceases to be happy, for frequently it results in her ceasing to be good. There is a craving in our nature after happiness which must be gratified by any means that are at hand, just as there’s a craving for sunlight in plants ; and young folks with no experience are not always able to judge of what is real happiness, or what are the justifiable means of getting it. I’ve seen ’em, sir—I’ve seen ’em, sir—the fairest and most promising young souls, sacrificing truth, affection, sincerity, self - respect—everything—to obtain happiness, and gaining nothing but the husks of it. God forbid my Delia should make such a bad bargain as that ! She shall not, if so be ’tis in my power to gratify her wishes. That’s why I am so determined to do the thing thorough. If she wants society, she shall have it, and the very best as is to be had for money. The entertainments at my house shall be as

good as are to be had anywhere—and better, if possible. There shall be the best wines, the best music, the best victuals—the best of everything, so that a markiss or a dook may put his legs under my table and be satisfied.’

We talked upon this subject for some time, or rather he talked, for my position only allowed me to drop in a word now and again; and then he stopped to apologize once more for ‘plaguing’ me with his personal cares.

‘I have talked about my child,’ says he, ‘because I can think of nothing else, though maybe I should not have said so much to another person in your place. There be some folks that one can never converse with save about the crops and the weather, while there are others that one must open one’s heart to at once; and you, sir, are one of them. Besdies, sir, the portrait you have made of Delia shows that you take a deep interest in her, and can enter into my

anxieties for her welfare ; so that there's a fellow-feeling betwixt us, as one may say. And sure-ly 'tis more pleasant to talk about a subject that is agreeable to both than to waste words on matters that one doesn't value of a straw.'

I answered that I was quite of his opinion, and that I was glad to have gained his confidence so readily.

'Yes, sir,' says he, 'I feel I can trust you—not simply because you have declined a piece of work which might have brought you in a thousand pounds or so, when at the same time you will turn an old woman's doorstep for a shilling, for that is an act of honesty which might be expected of any honest workman ; but because you wear in your face the signs of a generous disposition and delicate feelings, without which, was a man never so honest, he would by so much fall short of being a gentleman. In talking

of my daughter I have said nothing of which I am ashamed, and nothing which I could ask you to conceal ; yet I feel sure that had I betrayed anything which it would be against her interests or mine for the world to know, it would be as safe in your keeping as though the matter had not been mentioned.'

With these words he held out his hand, which I took and pressed with a most hearty feeling of goodwill. Then I rose to depart, saying I wished to make a mould of the medallion that night, in order that it might set sufficiently to take a couple of casts from it in the morning.

'If that be the case,' said he, laughing, 'I will not detain you, for I am as anxious about this portrait as you. I have told Delia nothing concerning it yet, minding that you should see her pleasure and surprise. What time, think you, will it be done?'

‘By eight to-morrow morning.’

‘Good!’ says he. ‘We breakfast at nine. You will share the meal with us, and see the effects of your handiwork in my child’s bright eyes. What say you, sir?’

My first impulse was to accept this invitation; but a dozen good reasons for declining it succeeded, and so, after a little stammering, I told Mr. Adams that I was anxious to get on to London, and that my affairs would not allow of delay. His countenance fell at this.

‘I have seen,’ says he, ‘just so much of you as makes me anxious to see a great deal more. However, sir, far be it from me to stand for one moment between you and the good fortune which I hope awaits you in London. I’m afraid I have taken up too much of your time already, sir.’

Upon the terrace we found Miss Adams walking with Miss Dobson. The young

lady wore now a black lace shawl thrown over her head and shoulders in the Spanish mode ; behind her was the primrose and pale green sky, in which the first star was twinkling. Seen from a little distance, with that background and the still surroundings, she looked like the Genius of the Twilight ; and the beauty of the picture cast a spell upon me, so that when we met I could say nothing.

‘ Mr. Falkland is going, Delia,’ said Mr. Adams.

‘ Good-night,’ she said, with the same bewitching look in her eyes I had seen there as she left the dining-room. ‘ ’Tis not good-bye, now.’

‘ But you won’t see him to-morrow,’ said Mr. Adams. ‘ He’ll be on his way to London before you are up.’

‘ So soon !’ cries she, in a tone of soft regret—the smile dying away from her face.

‘He cannot even stay to take breakfast with us.’

‘But you will if I ask you,’ said she, the bright light twinkling again in her eyes.

I thought of the danger of yielding to that seductive voice and those bewitching eyes. I stammered out some excuse—I know not what.

‘My dear Delia, Mr. Falkland has business to think of,’ remonstrated Mr. Adams, ‘and business must be considered before everything.’

‘If Mr. Falkland thinks so, we must say good-bye,’ said she.

The taunt did not alter my resolution, and I held out my hand, saying ‘Good-bye.’

‘Good-bye,’ she returned coldly, giving me the tips of her fingers, and making me at the same time a very formal courtesy.

Mr. Adams accompanied me to the gate. As we turned by the corner of the house I

looked back ; Miss Adams was no longer on the terrace.

It was but the pique of a spoiled child who had failed to get her desire, the resentment of a coquette whose pride was wounded ; yet it made my very heart ache to compare this cold farewell with the warmth of our previous parting in the church. I would have liked to take away the memory of a last sweet look, of the gentle pressure of her hand ; yet did I feel that for our mutual peace of mind it was well that she had no stronger feeling than that of a child or a coquette.

‘ Pshaw ! ’ thought I ; ‘ ’tis not worth thinking on. I am not in love with her, nor she with me. The utmost I could expect from her was mere politeness. ’Twas unreasonable to imagine that she would look after me when we had parted. I will think of her no more.’

But I continued to think, all the same ; and when I came to the stile in the meadows, from which one can see the terrace, I looked across eagerly, with the hope of seeing her there. Mr. Adams stood on the walk alone. I heard him call Delia, and loitered along the path, hoping she would come. But she did not.

I recalled to mind an Italian apothegm— ‘ A woman worships her master and whips her slave ;’ and I wondered if my behaviour in this last interview with Miss Adams had led her to consider I was no longer the master I had seemed to her in my mason’s blouse.





## CHAPTER VII.

LORD KESTRAL; HOW FALKLAND ENCOUNTERED  
HIM IN THE PARK, AND HOW HIS LORDSHIP  
UNDERTOOK TO GUIDE HIS NEPHEW ALONG  
THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY.

**I** MADE a mould from the medal-  
lion before going to bed, and  
took a cast from it the next  
morning. I was standing with the plaster  
in my hand, admiring, not my work, for  
I was now dissatisfied with it, but the face  
it represented, when I heard the sound of a  
foot upon the stairs, and the next moment  
some one knocked at my door.

‘Come in,’ I cried ; and Mr. Adams, dressed as handsomely as if he were going to a reception, though the hour was but a little after seven, entered the room.

‘I have come so early,’ says he, shaking my hand, ‘because I am impatient to have the portrait for one thing, and because I wanted to see you again for another.’

I handed him the cast at once, and he regarded it with many expressions of admiration and delight. The perfect whiteness added to the purity of the face, he said ; and he vowed, he should not be content till he saw it mounted in a handsome gold frame.

‘’Twill be a surprise indeed for Delia,’ says he ; ‘and I warrant will cure her of her megrims !’

‘Is Miss Adams unwell ?’ I asked.

‘Ay,’ says he ; ‘I know not what upset her, but there was no getting a smile out

of her last night ; and she complained of a headache, and went up to her chamber before the candles were lit. However, this will chase away her gloom to a surety : and I only regret you will not be by to receive her acknowledgments, and I warrant she'll be just as sorry in having no opportunity of making 'em to you. But you will come to see us in town—will you not, sir ?

I declared that nothing would give me greater pleasure ; and indeed I felt at that moment quite ready to sacrifice all my good resolutions for the sake of seeing Miss Adams again ; and had her father at that moment renewed his invitation to breakfast at his house, I should not have had the strength to refuse it.

‘ I will write the address,’ says he, ‘ if you will have the goodness to find me a pen.’

I ran downstairs, and fetched a sheet of paper and the ink.

‘I have paper,’ said he; and then he very carefully wrote, in a good bold round hand, his name and London address on the folded paper he had found in my absence. This done, he slipped the paper in my hand, and was for shaking hands and going at once; but having my suspicions, I opened the paper and looked within. It was a bank-bill for a hundred guineas.

‘Sir,’ said I, ‘I cannot take this!’

‘Then, by the Lord!’ cries he, laying down the cast, ‘I’ll not take this, though I value it at an hundred times the worth of that bit of paper.’

‘The portrait is a gift.’

‘And I took it as such. I do not pretend to pay for it; ’twould spoil the pleasure I have in taking it. Lookee, Mr. Falkland, I asked you as a matter of business to give me your professional advice concerning the alterations of my house;

you gave it, and 'tis for that I offer you this trifle.'

'Tis out of all proportion to the service. I cannot accept it.'

'Sir, I beg you to keep it. You will make me feel that I have offended the man I most wished to serve if you refuse it. I do beg you, sir, to keep it, if not as payment, as a resource to fall back upon if you are in need; for 'tis difficult to rise without money. Pay it back if you will when you are rich enough to do without it; but for Heaven's sake, sir, put it in your pocket, and say no more about it now.'

Beads of perspiration stood upon his face as he spoke, so agitated was he with his fear of my refusal; and seeing how grievously it would wound him to be denied, I clapped the bill in my pocket with a laugh, and held out my hand. He caught hold of both my hands, and shook them heartily, while his

honest eyes beamed with satisfaction ; and then, taking up the cast as if it were the most precious and fragile treasure in the world, he descended to his carriage, which was waiting before the door, and was carried away, nodding and smiling at me from the window.

After finishing the door-step for the sexton's wife, whom I greatly astonished by refusing to accept the coat she would have made me take as a recompense for my honesty in the matter of the paint-brush, I paid my score at the inn, and shouldering my bundle, trudged by way of Maidstone, Malling, Wrotham, etc., to Greenwich, where I arrived late at night, fairly tired, but in good heart.

The adventures of the preceding days had provided me with abundant food for rumination as I wandered along. My good luck concerned me very little, nor did I

give much thought to Mr. Adams, much as there was in his character to excite astonishment and curiosity. I dismissed him from my mind as a simple, good-hearted, honest, uneducated man, suddenly possessed of money which he knew not how to spend, and sorely puzzled to understand his daughter, and to find means to protect her from pitfalls which presumably had been fatal to his wife.

It was Miss Adams whom chiefly I recalled to mind, or rather who came unbidden there and commanded my consideration. I went through again, with delicious emotion, the scenes that had passed between us. In imagination I saw her again in the church—imperious, disdainful, enthusiastic, humble; I saw her on the lawn in her training gown and the hat that suited her so well, tricked out with all the cunning art of dress to enchant the eye; I saw her standing still

and silent in the twilight—a solemn and noble figure—suddenly to change like a sprite, and appear with all the archness and witchery and wilful petulance of a born coquette! I took exception to many of her varying moods, yet I knew not which I would dispense with, for one without the other lost piquancy and charm; so I finished by falling heartily in love with all, and admiring her character as much for its faults as its perfections. The day was showery, and as I looked round upon the meadows and woods glistening under the pearly clouds, their fresh and tender beauty seemed to my mind to typify Miss Adams, whose charms as far excelled those of the Italian women as this English landscape surpassed the brilliant, bold, and arid beauty of Italian scenes.

Should we ever meet again? I asked. Would she listen to me as she listened in

the church ? Would she again try to make me her captive ? Ah ! would she even remember me if we met again ? Beautiful and wealthy, she would have a hundred suitors at her feet, and would she turn from them to look at a poor mason ? With that I fell to thinking of my prospects—of the likelihood of rising to fame and fortune as a sculptor—of seeking her then, and being met with kindness—and of a thousand other unlikely things. When I stopped at Gravesend for refreshment, I found I had a blister on my foot ; but I forget all about it as I continued my journey and thought of Miss Adams ; nor did sleep put an end to my romantic dreams.

The next day I reached London ; and, my good genius not forsaking me, I had the luck to find employment with Mr. Rogers, the sculptor, within twenty-fours of my arrival.

For the first week I gave my services on trial, and contrived to give my employer such satisfaction, that at the end of that time he engaged me for three months at a salary of two guineas a week. The work I had to do was not of a high order, for it required nothing but skill and care; but, as Mr. Rogers pointed out, I should learn the usages of London studios, and profitably occupy my time while looking about for something better.

In Florence I had never a holiday from year's end to year's end, except for the Carnival; but now, thanks to the excellent usage of our Protestant religion, every Sunday gave me a day for relaxation. Here then was an opportunity offered me of visiting Mr. Adams and his daughter; but I let the weeks pass by without going nearer to Park Lane than the Mall; and, lest I should be unduly credited with wisdom in

avoiding the young lady who had so inflamed my imagination, I must confess that my chief reason for doing so was that I felt ashamed of my clothes and dared not to be seen in them by her. They had served me well enough for ten years, and I had never once found fault with them in Florence—or, indeed, given them two minutes' thought—but now I perceived that they were woefully dingy and out of fashion; and as for my linen blouse, which I had once been so proud of, I would as soon have presented myself before Miss Adams in my night-shirt as in that. Nevertheless, when I walked in the Park my eyes were for ever spying among the crowds of fashionable people for Miss Adams and her father.

One Sunday—it was the fourth since my arrival in London—as I was sauntering along the broad walk, glancing this way and that, I perceived an old beau coming to-

wards me, whose face and mien seemed not unfamiliar to my eye.

He occupied the middle of the path, and, with his arms well away from his side, was taking a pinch of snuff. With a most elaborate flourish of the right hand he carried the pinch to his nose, and with another flourish he tapped the lid of his box. This done, he was in the act of flourishing the box into his fob when, from his natural infirmity or some luckless mishap, it slipped from his fingers and shot down at my feet. With a genteel curse the old gentleman turned to the servant who followed a few paces behind, and was directing his attention to the accident, when I picked up the box and presented it. He took it from me, looked at my clothes to see what degree of gratitude it was necessary to express, and then, in a tone of lofty condescension, said :

‘Ah ! thank you, my good fellow, thank you !’

I knew the voice, and recognised the speaker.

‘If I am not mistaken,’ said I, ‘I have the pleasure of speaking to Lord Kestral.’

‘I am Lord Kestral,’ said he, in a good-natured voice—a little heightened in tone, maybe, to catch the ears of passers-by; ‘and who may you be, my poor fellow?’

‘Why, who should I be, my lord, but your own nephew, George Falkland.’

‘Falkland, Falkland—George Falkland!’ said he, dropping his voice, and glancing with some dismay from me to the fashionable folks who, seated along the edge of the walk, seemed to be taking a good deal of interest in our affairs.

‘Surely you remember me, my lord,’ said I—‘your brother Richard’s son, who wrote to you from Florence but a short time since?’

My uncle seemed not best pleased with

the recognition, and somewhat abruptly turned out of the crowded walk into a deserted side-path, after reluctantly giving me a couple of cold fingers to shake.

‘I suppose you are my nephew,’ said he, ‘but I’ve such a cursed bad memory, I can’t recollect you.’

‘You may remember that I wrote to your lordship asking the loan of a few guineas to bring me to England.’

‘Not I. Where’s my fellow? he may know. However, that’s of no moment. The main thing that concerns you, I suppose, is to have a few guineas now,’ said he gloomily, as he fumbled in his pocket for the readiest means of getting rid of me.

‘Thank you, my lord; I have no longer any need of assistance. I have money in my purse, and stand, as I hope, in a fair way of making my fortune.’

I admit that my hopes were considerably

in advance of my expectations, but I was anxious to disabuse my uncle's mind of the belief that I had stopped him with a view of drawing upon his charity.

‘Making a fortune!’ cried he, with much more civility than he had yet shown. ‘I am heartily glad to hear it. I would have given you what guineas I have in my pocket, but, egad!’—he glanced to the right and left, and dropped his voice—‘I should have suffered for it. So you have money, eh?’

‘Not much; but I have more than enough for my present wants, and there's a fair chance of making more.’

‘I am charmed to hear it. You shall tell me all about it. I'll have you to dine with me at my apartments in Bond Street—not to-day, for I made arrangements to dine abroad—but another time: something quite plain, you know—soup, fish, a little

poultry or game, with just one or two side-dishes, hey? a bottle of French wine to begin with and a pint of port after, hum?' My uncle gave a little gulp, as though the thoughts of such a dinner had set his mouth watering; and then, coming back to realities, asked how long I had been in town, and what I was doing.

I gave him a brief account of my struggles in Florence, of my present position, and the means by which I hoped to rise to fame and fortune.

'Fame is one thing,' said he, 'and fortune is another; but still the two do occasionally go together. I cannot say I have a high opinion of artists; but there is nothing degrading in your occupation: 'tis a profession, though a mean one. The best artist we have can boast of nothing higher than a knighthood, and a poor remuneration for all his hand and brain

can produce. He expends all that is in him on a picture or a statue; he sells it, and there's an end of it, so far as his gain is concerned. But the same amount of ingenuity and perseverance employed in the service of the ruling minister would get him maybe a barony, a sinecure, and a pension.'

Coming to a seat, my uncle, after taking a glance to the right and left to see that no gentlefolks were in the walk, bade me sit down with him. He then made further inquiries into my circumstances; and being well pleased with the account I gave of them and of my expectations, he promised to stand by me and give me the benefit of his guidance, without which he assured me I should never rise above the rank of a mechanic. He proceeded to give me a specimen of his advice, and evidently found such pleasure in laying down the scheme

for my advancement that I had not the heart to show him how impossible it would be for me to carry out his ideas.

‘You are my nephew,’ said he, ‘and may count yourself my heir; and though you are not likely to get much by my death, you cannot fail to derive immense benefit by your relationship while I live. I possess a title, and, although I am at present unable to keep an equipage, I may flatter myself that no nobleman is more widely known and respected than I am.’ Without any false modesty he said a good deal more to this effect, and then, returning to my affairs, he proceeded: ‘The first thing to be done is to get a decent coat to your back. No man can succeed who does not study his dress. If you dress like a beggar, you’ll be treated like a beggar; whereas to him who dresses like a prince, all things are possible. I will tell you why genius

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goes in rags and tatters—'tis because genius has not the common-sense to wear purple and fine linen. You, my boy, if you are wise, will do better. You will first get a handsome suit of clothes ; they will put you in a position at once to take a fine house. A fine house will enable you to procure rich furniture, and with a well-furnished house you will have no difficulty in getting a coach and horses. You will put your servants in livery, of course. Then we will drive in the Park, and I will introduce you to persons of title and distinction. I shall spread the report that you have a prodigious talent for the Arts ; and that, together with your clothes, your equipage, your good looks, and the fact that you are my nephew, will excite curiosity to see your house. There you will fit up a study in the most handsome manner possible, and in some unique but picturesque costume you will practise

your art and receive visitors at the same time. That will require some address ; but I will instruct you carefully, and I doubt not you will have the ability to acquit yourself to advantage. You will become the talk of the town. It will be the fashion to visit your study, and converse with you at your work. I shall take care to let it be known that though you yourself do not concern yourself in mercantile matters, your works are to be had through such and such an agent. Then it will be considered a sign of bad taste or a want of means to be without an example of your art, and your agent will be besieged by clamorous purchasers ; and they who would not give twopence for your best work if they thought you were in need, will think themselves fortunate to get your worst for a couple of thousand pounds.'

Despite the gravity of my uncle, I could

not restrain my mirth at the fanciful picture he had drawn of my future career.

‘I am not aware,’ said his lordship stiffly, ‘that I have said anything ridiculous.’

‘Pardon me, my lord ; but you overlook the fact that I have not above fifty guineas wherewith to purchase all these fine things that are to make me the idol of fashion.’

‘Pshaw ! do you pay rent before it is due, or your tradesmen’s bills before the goods are delivered ? And think you shopkeepers are so dull to their own interests as to hand their effects over to a bailiff when, ’tis as clear to their eyes as ’tis to mine, that by waiting humbly they’ll be well paid for their venture ? Egad, I envy you your chance, and would willingly change places with you !’ cried he, with a short husky laugh ; ‘for you’re

beginning to make your fortune, whilst I am mighty near the end of losing mine.'

'I am sorry to hear that,' said I. 'Surely your lordship must have made some bad speculation; for I was given to understand you had married the widow of a millionaire, and not so many years since, neither?'

''Tis true!' said he, with some excitement. 'I did marry the widow of a millionaire; but I was robbed. Do you hear me, sir?—robbed!'

'By whom?'

'By a thief of a servant. I lose my temper when I think of it. When we are alone, you shall hear all about it. By the way, nephew, where do you dine to-day?'

'At my lodgings, sir. My landlady has undertaken to dress me a dish of boiled mutton by two o'clock.'

‘Boiled mutton!’ said my uncle, with a gulp; ‘and ’tis now on the stroke of half-past one. Boiled mutton!—an excellent dish at this season of the year. There’s nothing I eat with a greater relish, nothing—in the simple style.’

‘In that case you may perhaps give me the pleasure of your company?’

‘That I will!’ he replied with alacrity; ‘for I see very clearly you will need my help on the road to prosperity.’





## CHAPTER VIII.

FALKLAND ENTERTAINS LORD KESTRAL WITH  
AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF.

**W**E rose and took the path into Piccadilly ; and here, wishing to spare my uncle the shame of being seen walking with a man in a shabby coat, I hailed a hackney-coach, and bade the driver carry us to my lodgings. This arrangement, I saw, gave my uncle great satisfaction, and for more reasons than one. For though he walked without the aid of a stick—which, as I discovered later, he had relinquished as

soon as he began to feel the need of it—and carried himself as erect as a drum-major, he walked with the portentous slowness of one whose joints are stiffening with age.

He professed to be heartily disgusted with the condition of the vehicle and the pace at which it travelled; nevertheless, as we passed through St. Giles's, I believe he was well pleased to be seen riding in this humble conveyance by the poor people, whom he regarded from the window with an air of seigneurial superiority. The behaviour of his servant, who seemed to share his lordship's ridiculous pride, was not less amusing. Perched on the box beside the driver, he folded his arms and carried himself with such imperturbable gravity and rigidity as might have been expected had the equipage been a chariot-and-six.

I lived in a turning off Oxford Road, where, in addition to a bedroom and sitting-room on the upper floor, I rented an out-house, where I worked in the morning, before going to my employer's studio. My landlady, Mrs. Jilks, was a notable good woman and the widow of a Churchman, who, forming an estimate of my condition by my frugal habits and the state of my linen, which though scanty was of fine quality but sadly in need of repair, doubtless concluded that I was an unlucky wretch who had lost my friends and fortune, and had nothing to hope for in the future but pity and buffets.

She took care to have her rent the moment it was due, and in performing those offices which were indispensable, she displayed an air of Christian resignation, as though performing an act of voluntary charity ; for the rest, she let me wait upon myself, hinting

that Heaven helps those who help themselves, and that it was my duty to give as little trouble as possible.

When this estimable person was told by the little maid who opened the door that I had taken a couple of gentlemen up to my room, and desired that an extra cover should be set on my table, she bustled upstairs in a pet, exclaiming against beggars on horseback, and declaring that she was not the woman to fly in the face of the Holy Scriptures by slaving for whatever raff I chose to bring into her house on the Lord's Day; but no sooner did she catch sight of my uncle's magnificent habit, and hear him addressed by his title, which his man took occasion to mouth every time he spoke, than she altered her tone, and, dropping a courtesy, begged him to have a care that he did not set his foot in the broken board on the landing, which should have been mended had I only let her

know I was going to have visitors of quality ; she then assured me that I should be served with her best in the twinkling of an eye, and ran downstairs as quickly as she had bustled up, but with vastly altered feelings towards me. My uncle, who perceived the change in her tone, took the occasion to draw a moral from her behaviour.

‘ Here, my dear,’ says he, ‘ you see the effect of dress and position ; and, believe me, though this woman may be less tutored than others of superior station, she is not one whit less prejudiced or more blind than they. ’Tis the common weakness of humanity, by which they may profit who will.’

Pilcher, Lord Kestral’s man, having unbuckled his master’s garters and loosened his stays, was on the point of being dismissed to get his dinner at an eating-house with a shilling, which his lordship, having

no change, had borrowed from me, when Mrs. Jilks, coming up with the tray, begged she might be allowed to entertain him in her parlour; his lordship acceded to this request with a careless wave of his hand, and slipped the shilling into his own pocket, happily forgetful, as it seemed, that it had come out of mine. Knowing the woman's inquisitive disposition, I thought it advisable, when she and her guest left the room, to acquaint Lord Kestral of the fact.

'Have no fear,' said he; 'Pilcher has learnt his lesson, and values appearances as much as I do. For his own sake he paints my character in glowing colours—indeed, I never had a servant who knew his business better in the matter of lying to my advantage.'

My landlady having set the table with the best she had—crowding it with a vast

quantity of treasures from her closet, of which we could have no possible requirement, such, for example, as a china caudle-cup and a silver candlestick—placed the boiled mutton before us, together with a mug of strong ale, which she had drawn unbidden from her own cask, and my uncle and I fell to; and surely, had the table been furnished with all the luxuries of a French court, his lordship could not have eaten with greater zest.

My uncle said but very little until his appetite was appeased; then, glancing at the remnants of our feast and round the bare walls, he said:

‘We shall smile to remember all this when we are seated at your table with a glitter of silver and crystal before us, and surrounded by all that is elegant in upholstery and rich in decoration.’

‘Possibly,’ said I, ‘if that day comes.’

‘If it comes? It must come, and that within six months.’

‘That depends upon my ability, and the appreciation my work meets with.’

‘A fiddle-stick’s end for ability! So that your work is not monstrously bad—and from the success you have achieved with that coat on your back, I take it that your merits as an artist are high—there can be no doubt of its being appreciated to the utmost of your wishes.’

‘It may still be a long while before I enjoy the luxuries you hint at.’

‘Why, sir, have I not made it clear to you that you can have your house, your equipage, your servants, as soon as you choose to take them?’

‘Perfectly,’ said I.

‘Well, then, what d’ye mean by your “if’s” and “depends,” and the rest of it?’

‘To be plain with your lordship, I mean

that I shall take nothing until I have the money in my pocket to pay for it.'

'What romantic folly is this! Is it not sufficient that you pay for the things when you've got 'em? Does the sharpest rascal amongst these shopkeepers demand more than that?'

'It is quite possible that I should be able to pay for everything I chose to take if I sold my work for prices out of all proportion to its value.'

'Heyday! Can you tell me the worth of a rose-noble, sir?' asked my uncle, with some warmth.

'Sixteen or seventeen shillings originally, I believe.'

'Well, then, that man's a rascal who let me have this that I carry on my chain for thirty shillings, and I should be a knave to sell it again for more than its original value! Gad's my life! would you have me to

understand that you take my suggestion to be dishonourable ?

‘ Our views are so opposed, my lord,’ said I, not wishing to offend my visitor, ‘ that I opine neither of us could follow the other’s guidance without violation to his sense of wisdom or justice ; thus I, without being a madman, might lay down a course which you would consider it madness to follow, and you in perfect honour may suggest a line of conduct which my principles will not permit me to adopt.’

‘ Very well put, my dear,’ said his lordship, shaking me by the hand, for he seemed fully as anxious as I to avoid a rupture. ‘ I doubt if I could have said it better myself. I see you have studied the metaphysics ; and your argument is very sound. However, I have no doubt but that you will see this matter more clearly when you are cool ; the dinner has heated you, so we will

forsake argument at present and return to it—say—to-morrow. I will only add that I hope your principles won't prevent your buying a decent suit of clothes.'

'You will be pleased to hear that I have already been measured by a tailor.'

'I wish I had been by at the time. None of your Lincoln cloths nor your shovel collars, I do trust.'

'You may depend on it, sir, I have chosen a cloth and a fashion suitable to a gentleman.'

'I'm glad to hear it, with all my heart,' said his lordship, again pressing my hand to prove his good feeling; 'for amongst other crazes with which men of genius are afflicted, is that of dressing as nearly like chairmen as is possible. With a good coat to your back I can still hope. However, as I see you are yet a little heated; we will change the subject. Let us talk of something pleasant.'

‘By all means,’ said I readily, for I was growing weary of the subject. ‘Your lordship was good enough to say you would tell me of the mischance by which you lost your fortune.’

‘Why, that’s a pleasant subject with a witness!’ he cried, with a short laugh. ‘I’ll give you the history, nevertheless, for it may serve to show you the danger of those romantic sentiments which I perceive with regret you are but too inclined to foster. Besides,’ adds he, ‘there is a relative pleasure in it for me; for ’tis like letting blood for an inflammation to recount one’s wrongs and give a vent to one’s choler.’

So saying my uncle pushed back his chair from the table, crossed his thin legs, and looked out of the window, as if to collect his thoughts before beginning the narrative.



## CHAPTER IX.

LORD KESTRAL ENTERTAINS FALKLAND WITH  
AN ACCOUNT OF HONEST DAVIE.

**I**T would have been difficult to say how old my uncle was, for he neglected no art by which the ravages of time upon his features and person could be concealed, and he was careful to preserve an unvarying serenity of countenance, that no crease or wrinkle might injure the artificial surface of his skin. There was a peculiar waxy smoothness about his face that betrayed the use of unguents and cosmetics, and it was obvious that his teeth were false and his eyebrows stained; yet

the eye was so cheated, that despite the knowledge of these artifices one could not believe he was past his sixtieth year. A watery affection of the eyes, which obliged him at intervals to use his handkerchief, was the only infirmity not to be concealed ; but even this he contrived to make less noticeable by keeping his eyelids half closed, in an indolent languid fashion, which went very well with the affected placidity of his expression ; and this served a double turn, for his eyes were the worst feature in his face, being small, colourless, and evil-looking when, as I now saw them, he permitted the lids to separate to their natural extent.

I was observing these characteristics when, suddenly turning from the window through which he had been looking for some moments, he asked :

‘ Did you ever hear anything concerning Mrs. Walsingham ? ’

‘ Mrs. Walsingham—never to my knowledge.’

‘ Hum ! then I will begin by telling you something about her. What Mrs. Walsingham’s maiden name was I never gave myself the trouble to inquire ; possibly she never had a just title to any. When I first knew her, ten years ago, she was the handsomest woman in London, and she was then seven-and-twenty ; probably she was still more beautiful ten years before that, which explains a good deal of what happened about that time or a year or two later. A young woman of eighteen or nineteen, beautiful as she was, and, as far as I can learn, entirely without relatives or friends, must have been besieged by half the young bloods in town, and subjected to temptations which perhaps one girl in ten thousand could overcome. Well, sir, one fine day this little person in the bloom of her youth, healthy, high-

spirited, volatile, and an admirable actress—an admirable actress,' repeated his lordship with a significant leer, after stanching a tear from his eye, 'marries an old gentleman of sixty-five, and giving up her liberty and its lively delights, goes to live at Southgate, in a house as much like a prison or a mad-house as any house you ever saw.'

'Why on earth did she do that?' I asked.

'I can't tell you with certainty. She told me that she was compelled by her guardian to marry the old fellow; but I never saw, nor have I ever heard of anyone who had seen her guardian, and I make it a rule to disbelieve anything which that lady asserts. The man she married was named Bond. He was a silversmith and banker of Lombard Street, and a millionaire according to the general belief. Most wealthy men are millionnaires by reputation. One thing is certain—his wealth was very great; for he

sold his business—some years after his marriage—for thirty thousand pounds; and as he lived with the simplicity of an anchorite, and had not a soul in the world to hamper him, he must have amassed an enormous sum in his forty years of buying and selling and cheating and lending. Possibly this young woman had reasons for wishing to be married; possibly she was dazzled by the glitter of Mr. Bond's gold. Probably she thought she could do what she liked with an old man who was weak enough to fall in love with her after so many years of celibacy; probably she expected to stay but a very short time in that Southgate home, and knowing the power of her charms, believed she could lead her old husband by the nose, bring him to London, establish herself in the midst of society, and indulge in all the diversions of a fine lady at his expense. But in this she was vastly at fault. Mr. Bond

may have been a fool as her lover ; but he was wise enough as her husband. Likely enough marriage had cured him of his folly—it has brought many another fool to reason. It is certain that he did not lose his money in addition to his wits. No, no ! The man who is keen enough to make a fortune is generally shrewd enough to keep it, you will find. As soon as the honeymoon was over, he resumed his old regular business habits—going up to town by the coach of mornings, and coming back again of evenings without varying an hour.’

‘ But what did he do with his wife ? ’

‘ What did he do with her ? Why, he kept her fast in that hideous gloomy house, just as he might have secured a treasure in his strong box to guard against being robbed of it. The scales must have dropped pretty quickly from his eyes, and discovered the character of the young woman he had

married ; for he never took her out with him, except to church, and never trusted her with a penny piece of his money.'

'She could not endure that for a long time.'

'She did not. As soon as her son was born—which was within a year of her marriage—she bolted.'

'Did she take her child with her ?'

'Oh yes—curse him ! To enable her to run away, she obtained money—as I told you she had none of her own—from Mr. Bond's gardener, Davie—"Honest Davie," as he was generally called. Now, this fellow had been Mr. Bond's servant from his boyhood, and was, I take it, as clever a rascal as need be, or he couldn't have kept his place with such a shrewd old man for his master. And here,' says my uncle, taking a pinch of snuff, 'let me give you a word of advice respecting servants. If you are lucky

enough to get one that suits you, keep him, but never trust him. He's a rogue. If he were a fool he wouldn't give you satisfaction. If he wasn't a rogue and sharp enough to see how to serve himself, he'd never give himself the trouble to serve you. Their roguery grows with their service ; they learn your weak points and how to take advantage of them ; and the longer they keep their places the more cunning they become. This Honest Davie illustrates the truth. The first proof of his fidelity was to fall in love with his master's wife, albeit he had a wife of his own who was kept to wait upon Mr. Bond. Mr. Bond's garden, as you may suppose, was not used for the cultivation of flowers ; but Davie had a small patch of pinks and pansies which he grew for his own profit, you may be sure, and these he culls for Mrs. Bond as soon as her husband's back is turned ; no woman is proof against attentions of this

kind, and doubtless Mrs. Bond smiled her sweetest in thanking Honest Davie for his gift. At any rate, he was so far encouraged that before the week is out he makes a flower-border before her window and plants it with things that he must either have stolen or paid for out of his own pocket, for Mr. Bond disclaimed any part in the proceeding when his wife thanked him for what she believed was his kindness. Honest Davie's next performance is to scrape and clean up some garden-tools and lay them in Mrs. Bond's way, that she may amuse herself in poking and raking the beds about. There was nothing whatever to amuse her within doors—not a book, not a picture, nor an instrument of music—nothing at all. Gad's me, 'tis as dull and prison-like within as without, that house at Southgate ; so Mrs. Bond accepts these suggestions, and potters about her flower-bed, and listens to Honest Davie's

Georgics ; and finally, when the baby is born, and winter puts an end to the delights of grubbing about in the garden, the faithful servant gives money to Mrs. Bond to enable her to desert her husband. What think ye of that ?

‘ His affection was at least disinterested.’

‘ How do you know ? The cunning rascal had good reasons, as you will see, to alienate the wife from the husband at a moment when the birth of a child might have created a new and stronger tie between them. And mind, I do not profess to give you an exact statement of all that took place at that time. I have no authority but the word of Mrs. Bond ; her assertions are utterly unreliable, and it is only by winnowing out the few statements that seem true, from the mass that are palpably false, that I get material to form an approximate history of her career. To continue : Mrs. Bond, after

various unimportant vicissitudes, joined a troop of strolling players, relinquishing the name she had forfeited the right to bear, and assuming that of Walsingham. For three years she travelled over the country, playing in barns and tap-rooms, and living a vagabond, careless life, which I have no doubt suited her tastes to a nicety ; and then Mr. Richmore chancing to be present at a performance, he was so smitten with her beauty and her talent, that he at once offered her an engagement at the little theatre in the Haymarket. She accepted, and in the winter of '86 made her first appearance before a London audience as Miss Prue in "Love for Love." Her success was immediate and complete. I was present, and I confess that I was as thoroughly carried away by her acting and her good looks as anyone in the house ; I led the applause from my side-box, and at the

conclusion of the performance I went into the green-room to pay her my compliments. She was pleased to receive me most graciously, and from that day I became her very constant attendant. I make no secret of it, my dear, that woman captivated me—and made a slave and a fool of me, as she did of a dozen others. I was an imbecile under her influence ; I believed every word she said ; I pitied her ; I admired her virtue ; for I must tell you that, though she liked gaiety and fine clothes, and would visit Ranelagh and Vauxhall, or go to a ball or *ridotto* whenever she had the chance, there was nothing in her conduct which could be spoken of—in my hearing—to her disadvantage. She professed to look upon me as her father, and I was so lost to all sense of dignity that I accepted to play the farcical part she assigned me. She would go nowhere without me, and I have been

kept standing about a ball-room from midnight till morning, while she danced before my eyes with—with men who care for that kind of exercise. It was thus the designing hussy kept *me* assured of her virtue and sustained my esteem and passion. It was thought at the time—as I have heard since—that our relations were of a more warmly intimate kind; but I assure you, my dear, there was no truth in the report. In the first place I had no means to offer her support, as with the loss of my seat in Parliament went my only chance of redeeming the money I had spent in procuring that and my title. Kestral Hall is a ruin, which I have no means of repairing, and which no one will purchase, for every stick of timber is cut down, and it stands in the midst of a waste; 'tis with much ado I get a few guineas by letting the grounds for the grazing of sheep. In

the second place, Mrs. Bond was far too wise to lose the prize she was scheming for by any act of indiscretion. Why, sir, she never suffered me to cross the threshold of her door ; and, just as she kept me by her side as a protection against other gallants, so she kept her abominable brat with her whenever we went in a coach as a protection against me.'

My uncle calmed his emotion with a pinch of snuff, and continued :

'Matters had been going on in this wise for nigh upon two years, and my imbecility increased rather than diminished, when one day she came to me weeping—she could cry as readily as she could laugh—and told me she had heard that her husband was dying, and asked me if I didn't think she owed it, as a duty to her son, to go to Southgate and beseech Mr. Bond to forgive her. I heartily supported this proposal, and the following

day I put her in the coach at the Flower Pot in Bishopsgate Street, and saw her depart with her son. In the evening, when I met her again at the theatre, she told me that Mr. Bond had refused to see her, but that Honest Davie had promised to intercede in her behalf, and hoped he would be able to induce the old man to make some provision for his widow. Three days later a curious incident occurred. It was my custom of an evening to chat with Mrs. Bond in the green-room for half an hour before the rising of the curtain. On this night, after cooling my heels in the green-room for some time, I went upstairs to see if she had left her dressing-room. The door was ajar, and expecting to find the room empty, I opened the door without knocking. There I found Mrs. Bond seated, with a man kneeling at her feet and holding her hand. With a few polite

words I excused myself, and descended to the stage in a state of mind which I need not attempt to describe. At first I determined to leave the house and never see the woman again; but, on second thoughts, I resolved to wait and see if she could offer any explanation. Between the acts she came to me, and, with a vast show of agitation, she said, "My lord, Mr. Bond is dead." Then, after a moment's silence, she added, "And I have given my promise to marry the man you saw kneeling at my feet." "What man is that?" I asked, astounded by this strange combination of news. "Davie," said she. "The servant—the gardener?" I asked. "Yes," said she; "he brought me the news. My husband has left nothing either for me or my son. All is given to Davie, every penny. And the simple fellow, being now a widower, has asked me to share it with

him—a million of money. He says 'twas his master's intention to atone for his harsh treatment and neglect, and to give me a husband and his son a father, and that he so left his money that I might be induced to accept a man who has a true affection for me." Now,' said my uncle, turning to me, 'tell me what you think of that disposition.'

I reflected a minute or two, and then I said :

'Extraordinary as it looks at first, it seems to me the wisest and most humane thing Mr. Bond could do. He felt it to be his duty to make some provision for his son's education and for his wife's maintenance ; possibly he felt that he had caused her, by his own act, to quit him, and that some atonement was necessary. But, doubtful of Mrs. Bond's prudence, he saw that it would be unwise to place her in unrestricted possession of a large sum

of money. He had implicit faith in Davie's honesty, and knew of his affection for Mrs. Bond; and he saw no better way of providing for her happiness and his son's welfare than by placing the money in Davie's hands, with the suggestion that he should marry Mrs. Bond and be a father to her son—that seems to me an ingenious and wise arrangement, which might very well be made by a man shrewd and discerning, such as Mr. Bond seems to have been.'

'That is precisely what I thought, my dear. But what seemed to me irreconcilable with this theory was Davie's honesty in executing his master's suggestion.'

'You would not grant that a servant could be honest in any circumstances?'

'No; and the event proved that I was right in my estimation. But what at that moment convinced me that he was playing

false cards was this: he had insisted upon Mrs. Bond giving an immediate answer to his offer, and upon the marriage being consummated within a week.'

'Possibly he felt it his duty to carry out Mr. Bond's wishes before any accident could arise to frustrate them,' I suggested.

'Let me proceed,' said my uncle impatiently. 'A solution of the mystery had occurred to me. In the first place, I extorted a promise from Mrs. Bond that she should not marry Davie until the will of her late husband had been proved. Then I went to the expense of instructing a lawyer to represent Randolph Bond—Mrs. Bond's son—and to attend the formal reading of the will on the day of the funeral. On the evening of that day the lawyer informed me of what had taken place. A great many gentlemen, who had known Mr. Bond in business, attended the funeral,

and subsequently returned to his house with Mr. Bond's lawyer to hear if they were to receive anything by his will. When they were all assembled, the lawyer rose, and said that he had to inform them of a somewhat peculiar fact. A few days before his last, Mr. Bond had made a will, leaving his house and all it contained to his servant Davie. That will Mr. Bond himself had taken charge of. Since his death a complete search of the house and investigation of his papers had been made, with a view to finding the will, but without success. As the will bequeathed all the property to Davie, and no one but he had been in the house, it was impossible to attribute the disappearance of the will to foul play. The conclusion that seemed to him probable was that Mr. Bond, in his last moments, touched with pity for his wife and child, and with remorse for his past

neglect of them, had himself destroyed the will. In the absence of that will all Mr. Bond's property fell to his son, whose representative was present; and it was his duty to place the estate at once in his hands—in a word, my dear, my supposition was verified. Davie knew that the will had been destroyed—knew that the property would go to the boy, and made a bold stroke to get the widow and have the control of that money during little Randle's minority.'

'How did this discovery affect Davie?' I asked, after considering the matter for some moments in silence.

'It seems he sat as silent as a fish all through the proceedings, and would scarce say yea or nay when spoken to.'

'Is it possible Mr. Bond could have been so deceived in this man's character?'

'He had a cunning rogue to deal with—a

rascal whose guise of simplicity deceived everyone. Now, my dear, I come to a new development of events. Despite this proof of Davie's duplicity, Mrs. Bond maintained that she must keep her promise and become his wife. Her nerves seemed to be greatly shaken, and I attributed her emotion to finding herself thus suddenly put in possession of an enormous fortune. For she heard nothing but rumours of the immensity of her husband's riches from those that surrounded her, and everyone courted her as though she were a queen. Still she persisted that she must marry Davie—now because he had been so good to her in her unhappiness, and now because, if he was the villain I declared him to be, she should fear his revenge if she failed to keep her promise. At length, to put an end to these tortures, I offered her my hand, and to play off Davie, I proposed that we should be privily married

at Doctors' Commons, and go at once to Paris. This proceeding on the part of a man of my experience and cautious habits doubtless seems to you rash and impetuous, but you must consider that there were powerful reasons for haste ; in the first place, passion brooks no delay, and in the second, had I not taken her at once, I should probably have lost her altogether ; for no sooner was it known that she was the widow of Mr. Bond, the millionaire, than her admirers declared the most honourable intentions, and I believe she might have taken her choice of a dozen men of good position, who were all ready to marry her at a moment's notice. She accepted me, and within forty-eight hours we were married and out of England. She had won the trick for which she had so skilfully played her cards. She was no longer a nameless adventuress—a player of doubtful antecedents ; she was Lady Kestral, and the

wife of a peer of England. I had given her name, position, and title ; you will presently see what I got in return. The lawyer whom I had instructed to represent Randolph Bond at the funeral undertook to examine Mr. Bond's affairs, go through his papers, and discover how his money was invested. He could give me no idea of the value of the estate, which, in consequence of its magnitude, would take some time to realize. The rascals are all alike ; they lengthen their bills in accordance with the length of the purse to be drained. I could afford to wait. The fellow did not hesitate to advance me a sum of money on my note of hand, when he had seen me married to Mrs. Bond, and he promised to communicate with me as soon as there was any news to tell.

‘ We made the journey to Paris in state, and you may fancy, my dear, the delight I felt in spending money freely after being

compelled to economise so long. I was prodigal ; I scattered my riches broadcast—the best was not good enough for me. Couriers carried the account of my munificence before us, and we were fêted like royalty in every town we stopped at. Naturally this ran away with the few hundreds my little lawyer had furnished me with, and the first thing I did upon arriving in Paris was to write to him for a fresh supply. A week passed, and then, as my wife and I were taking breakfast, the servant brought two letters—one for Lady Kestral, the other for me. I opened mine ; 'twas from the lawyer of Throgmorton Street. In a few words he excused himself from advancing the sum of money I had demanded, and returned the note I had sent him. I was stunned ; I couldn't understand what I read.

“I hope you have received no ill news, my lord,” says my wife. I looked across the

table at her with sudden suspicion. She was eating an egg, but she seemed to be paler than usual. Her letter lay unopened beside her plate. I could see the address was written in the same hand as mine.

“Be good enough to read that letter,” I said, “and let me know what your lawyer has to say.”

‘She assumed a smile of the most consummate complaisance, which was in itself suspicious, seeing that I was in a damnable rage—broke the seal, opened the paper, pretended to read, at first with indifference, then in perplexity, and finally with a scream she dropped the letter, and fell back as if in a swoon. I crossed the room and stood over my wife; the muscles of her face did not move, but she could not check the beating of her heart: her bosom heaved. I turned and picked up the letter.’

His lordship put his hand in his breast, and brought out a well-stuffed letter-case that clearly served more than one purpose, and taking out a folded sheet of thin paper, continued :

‘ Here it is. I kept it as a security, and have carried it in my book for ten years—read it.’

My uncle handed me the letter of which the following is, as nearly as I recollect, the contents :

‘ HONoured MADAM,

‘ In compliance with your instructions, I have proceeded to substantiate the claims of Mr. Randolph Bond to the estate of his father, the late Mr. Bond, of Southgate. As there is no opposition to the succession, and as the property is of much smaller proportions than it was originally thought to be, the matter will in all probability be

very shortly settled. I have made a complete investigation of all documents, papers, etc., found in the residence of the late Mr. Bond, and made an inventory of all goods and chattels thereunto appertaining, but press of business has prevented me from making an exact valuation of the entire estate ; roughly, however, I believe the total value may be set down at a figure between fifteen hundred (£1,500) and two thousand pounds (£2,000), of which the items are as follows :

Dwelling-house, forecourt, garden, etc., situate in Fox Lane, Southgate (say) . . .	£1,500	0	0
Plate, furniture, linen, apparel, and chattels, various (say) . . .	100	0	0
Cash in purse of deceased Mr. Bond	98	7	6½
<hr/>			
Total (say) . . .	£1,698	7	6½

Against this as off-set are unpaid bills as follows :—

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Dr. Blandley . . . .	£15	15	0
J. Boans (undertaker) . . . .	10	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£25	15	0

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If, madam, from the above statement you are led to conclude that the great bulk of the property undoubtedly possessed within a recent date by the late Mr. Bond was feloniously made away with between the date of Mr. Bond's death and of the keys being placed in my hands, and, further, desire that the criminal party (or parties) be brought to justice, I shall have great pleasure in undertaking the case; but I am compelled to inform you that from the extreme difficulty which will attend the procuring of convicting evidence, the expenses must of necessity be very heavy, and such as I cannot encounter without a sufficient guarantee of repayment.'

'Where have you got to?' asked my uncle.

I told him.

‘That is sufficient,’ said he, taking the paper from me.

‘When I arrived at that point, I turned and looked down again at my wife. She was still playing her part; she had not stirred a muscle. “Madam,” said I, “as I perceive from the motion of your breast that you have only lost a certain portion of your senses, I will presume that you still retain the faculty of hearing. I have told you that I cannot endure fools; that should have warned you against making yourself my wife. For you are a fool, though for a time you have had the cunning to make me believe you were something higher in the scale of intelligence. You *knew* that your son had but a paltry sum to inherit; you knew that your husband’s money was already in the possession of his servant. But you thought it would be more to your

social advantage to marry a lord than a thief. You made a mistake—a great mistake, as you shall find by experience ; for the folly you have committed you shall repent as long as you have the lord for your husband and he has the fool for his wife.” ’

His lordship spoke with vehemence, as if he were at that moment bending over the woman who had tricked him ; then suddenly recollecting himself, he shrugged his shoulders and threw himself back in his chair.

‘ But the thief ? ’ said I.

‘ I have never set eyes on him since the night I saw his back, as he knelt at the feet of Mrs. Bond in her dressing-room.’

‘ But surely you made some attempt to recover the fortune he had stolen ? ’

‘ What attempt could I make ? I was in debt already. I had no money to go on

with, even had I been tempted to throw good after bad. What chance was there of success? There was nothing to prove that Mr. Bond had not disposed of his fortune before dying; the man had disappeared from the neighbourhood, being turned out of the house the day my lawyer took possession of it in the name of my stepson! As a proof of the impossibility of recovering the lost fortune, not one of the lawyers whom I applied to would agree on any condition to make the undertaking at his own risk. If I had realized every scrap of property I possessed, the only use the lawyers would have put it to would have been the payment of their own bills!

‘And Lady Kestral—what became of her?’ I asked.

‘I will tell you,’ said my uncle, with a malevolent smile and a twinkle of his cruel eyes. ‘I took her back to the

empty house at Southgate—the prison she had found intolerable, even with honest Davie to comfort her—the home her first husband had given her ten years before ; that other old man whom she had thought to fool and bend to her desires. The shutters were fastened and barred. It was dark and dismal ; outside, the leaves were falling and the trees looked like spectres in the fog. It was growing late in the day ; our footsteps echoed in the house like footsteps in a sepulchre ; the place smelt damp and musty. I opened the first door I came to, and let her in ; upon my honour, I feared to penetrate farther into that dismal house. She clung to my arm as though I were a dear friend ; and when I shook her off, she fell upon the floor, unable to stand upon her feet, and there, without one single word, I left her ; and, as I quitted the house, I banged the heavy street-door behind me !

‘Poor wretch!’ I exclaimed involuntarily.

My uncle glanced at me with raised eyebrows, then turned his eyes away with a contemptuous sneer.

‘She had her son with her?’ I asked.

‘No; there was no one with her. You see, in my belief, she deserved punishment; and that was the only punishment which she could feel, and which I could inflict without recourse to ungentlemanly violence. After a week I let her have her son.’

‘Surely she did not stay in that house?’

‘Faith she did, though, and there she is at this very moment. You don’t know what a careful woman your aunt is, my dear.’

‘But if the dreary house was intolerable to her the first time, it must have been as bad, or worse, the second.’

‘She was a child the first time; she was a woman the second—that made all the

difference. She was less impressionable and more discreet. She had taken some sharp lessons, and learnt prudence by being punished for indiscretion. She had everything to loose and nothing to gain by running away. She had talent for nothing but acting. She had no money, for you may be sure I was not more generous in that respect than her first husband. She must earn money to live, and there was no means but by returning to the stage. There she could never have recovered her position, even had I permitted her to keep an engagement. She would have been a subject for the contemptuous pity of her rivals, and that her vanity could not brook. Her beauty might still have won the men to her side; but what sort of treatment could she expect from them? A woman who has run away from two husbands cannot cheat the world

into a belief that she is a blameless martyr. She could no longer have commanded the Platonic affections of her admirers, and she was far too cold and calculating to live in infamy for the sake of its ephemeral gratifications. She could have done better than that in marrying the thief of a servant. But she played for higher stakes, and waits to win. I called her a fool, but, begad, I didn't know her when I said that; I protest, she commands my respect when I think of her foresight and crafty perseverance. She has accustomed herself to the dulness of existence at Southgate—gaiety may have begun to pall upon her appetite—she leads an irreproachable life, and cultivates the respectable virtues. Part of the house she lets to a family of Quakers—it agrees with their ascetic tastes—with the proceeds she contrives to keep herself, she has even given her son

some sort of education, bad enough, I'll be bound, and never once has she demanded money from me. Possibly she foresaw what was to happen; she is cunning enough, and was content to put up with hardships and wait.'

'Wait!—for what?'

'My death!—don't you see her object? She is still young; thirty-eight, and looks less. She has kept her good looks and her reputation in an excellent state of preservation; and when the day comes, she will put on the deepest mourning for me, pose before the world as an excellent and ill-used woman, gain acceptance in the best circles by means of her title, and succeed in marrying a third—fool! Only,' my uncle added, with an unpleasant little laugh, 'she may have to wait longer than she expected!'



## CHAPTER X.

### THE MORTIFICATION OF LORD KESTRAL.

**L**ORD KESTRAL lay back in his chair, his hands nursed upon his thigh, his eyes closed, and the smile of complaisant satisfaction which was habitual to him upon his face : and I, turning my back upon him, fell to musing on his story and wondering why he had told it. If he thought to enlist my sympathies on his side, he did very unwisely ; for surely I must have lost my sense of honour, or all of my senses together, to regard his conduct in his own showing as

justifiable or even pardonable. I could not see that he was less blameworthy than the woman he had married, even supposing her to be as bad as he represented ; nor could I find that he was one jot better from a moral point of view than the thief Davie ; for, as he had barely mentioned the name of Mr. Bond's son, and spoken only of his own loss by Davie's dishonesty, I could not suppose that he had ever contemplated using Mr. Bond's fortune to the sole advantage of the boy whose heritage it was. I resolved that I would inform myself more particularly upon this point, and drop my uncle's acquaintance if his explanation was not satisfactory.

I must admit that in forming this resolution I was influenced less by principles of strict morality than by a feeling of dislike to my uncle, which I had taken during his narration, and which would have rendered

any plausible pretext for keeping him in the future at a distance acceptable.

In turning to speak to my uncle I was startled by the change in his appearance. His hands hung by his sides, his jaw was dropped, his cheeks fell in, his eyes were sunk in their caverns, the thin skin was stretched tight over the bones of the nose and cheeks—he slept. As I looked into that hard, cruel face, I said to myself that I need seek no further for testimony to the true character of his disposition. I did not disturb him ; but taking a book to the window, I sat me down and read for an hour.

His lordship was prodigiously amazed to find the light fading when he awoke, and annoyed that he had fallen asleep.

‘ Yellow as a kite’s foot, begad ! ’ cried he, looking at himself in the glass ; and then he fell to cursing the ale he had taken at dinner, and himself for drinking such poisonous

stuff, albeit no one could have more enjoyed it than he; and I heard him, when he was in the next chamber with Pilcher, cursing the fellow for his clumsiness all the time his disordered dress, his wig, his pads, and his straps, were being arranged. However, this bout of cursing seemed to have worked off his ill-humour; for he was as placid as the sea after a storm when he rejoined me, and did me the honour to say he should be very pleased if I would take him back to Piccadilly, fearing otherwise that he should never find his way out of the labyrinth in which I lived.

My landlady had thrown open her parlour door, and disposed a table with her best china upon it, so as to be seen in passing; and she herself, dressed in her best gown and a feather, came forward and made a most profound courtesy to Lord Kestral as we descended the stairs. She herself opened

the door, whilst the little drudge, who usually performed that office, stood by as a testimony to the condescension of her mistress. His lordship acknowledged this act of courtesy with a gracious inclination of the head; and taking a crown-piece from his pocket, dropped it with splendid carelessness into the hand of the little wench. Outside, he explained this piece of generosity to me. ‘My dear,’ said he, ‘you are doubtless astonished by my extravagance in giving a crown to that girl; be not deceived by appearances. She will never get another farthing from me, though I visited you a hundred times, but the memory of that crown, and the hope of getting another, would ever keep her attentive and obliging; and the effect upon her mistress will be no less remarkable. A man who has a position to sustain must have at least the reputation for generosity and charity, and

I take care to buy mine as cheaply as possible. About once a year I give a guinea to a footman and a crown to a crossing-sweeper; and there's not a crossing-sweeper nor a footman in London who does not know it; and in consequence, between their hopes of getting a like gratuity by attention, and their fear of losing it by incivility, the rascals, to wait upon me, will turn their backs on a dozen indiscriminate prodigals who fritter away fortunes upon them in shillings and half-pence. Do nothing by halves; be large in everything. Let your meanest acts be handsomely done. To be treated like a prince, you must play the part of a prince. In crossing a crowded road, for example, never run; you will be plashed with mud from neck to heels, or get a cut with a whip for your temerity. Stand in the road, and, with a wave of your hand, you may

stop every vehicle that goes upon wheels until you are safely crossed.'

My uncle being now fairly engaged upon his favourite theme, proceeded to show by a great many ingenious and plausible arguments that a man, to be prosperous, had only to be pretentious, and to cheat with plausible audacity. And I walked along by his side, saying never a word, for as I could not agree with a single one of his premises, nor explain my reasons for differing without giving affront, I thought it best to hold my tongue. He seemed to accept my silence as a kind of homage, however, and continued to give me the benefit of his wisdom until we came into the Oxford Road, when, looking about him, he said :

'I begin to see now where we are. Prithee, my dear, which way are we going ?'

‘Whichever road your lordship pleases to walk,’ said I drily.

At this my uncle pulled a long face, and cursing the Oxford Road for a barbarous out-of-the-world place, turned his face westward. I believe his sole motive in asking me to accompany him was to save his own legs at my expense. However, as there was no hackney coach or other vehicle within sight, he was spared the pain of finding my generosity behind his expectations, for I had firmly resolved that I would not spend another farthing, if I could help it, upon the old sinner.

We walked for some distance without meeting a coach, the old gentleman getting once more upon his favourite topic, when he stopped of a sudden, and exclaimed :

‘Begad ! we must be near Tyburn, I take it. Pray, how d’ye think to get into Piccadilly ?’

‘We are not far from the Hyde Park, said I; ‘and if we take the lane on this side, ’twill bring us to the foot of Piccadilly Hill. ’Tis an extremely pretty walk, I assure you.’

‘Yes; and highly genteel,’ he replied, with a glance at my coat. ‘It may suit a young fellow with your poetic temperament and young legs; but I assure you ’tis not to my taste. Whereabout lies Soho?’

‘Behind us; we have passed King Street some hundred yards.’

‘Then thither I will return,’ says he; ‘but I will not hinder you from taking your ramble in the Park, for I recollect that I owe a visit to some friends in the Square, whom I should have great pleasure in bringing you acquainted with, were you more presentable.’

While we were thus discussing on the path a handsome chariot passed us, which

my uncle, who professed to know all the aristocracy in London, no sooner saw, than he declared he knew it to be Lord Sackville's, by the liveries of the servants behind ; and his perturbation was great when the coachman suddenly reined in his horses and drew up by the roadside within a dozen yards of us.

‘Gad’s me!’ cried his lordship, ‘I’m recognised to a dead certainty. Here, too! How the devil am I to excuse myself? Get out of sight as quick as possible, my boy, for the love of heaven!’

Without waiting for a second bidding, I turned on my heel, and was striding off, when a voice behind me called :

‘Mr. Falkland! Hi, Mr. Falkland!’ and turning about, I perceived my friend Mr. Adams running towards me, and the fair face of Miss Adams peeping out of the chariot window.

Returning upon my footsteps, I met Mr. Adams within a couple of yards of where my uncle stood, looking as sheepish as may be at this unexpected turn of affairs.

‘I am heartily glad to see you, sir,’ said Mr. Adams, grasping my hand and panting for breath; ‘and, by the face of you, I believe you’re pleased to see me. But before I leave hold of your hand, you’ll have to tell me why you turned tail and strode off like a grenadier the moment I put my foot out of the carriage.’

‘To be brief,’ said I, ‘’twas my shabby clothes that caused me to turn my back on you.’

‘Then I have to thank your shabby clothes for a shabby compliment; for though no man values gentility more than I do, I have not so little good sense as to prefer a new coat to an old friend.’

‘You owe the shabby compliment,’ said I,

laughing, 'to your being mistaken for my uncle's friend.'

'And who is your uncle, sir?'

'Lord Kestral—Mr. Adams,' said I, turning about to my uncle; and with this brief introduction I left them face to face, and hurried to the chariot-window and beautiful Miss Adams.

A lackey opened the door, and Miss Adams, giving me her hand, said, with a radiant smile and a flush of colour that came straight from her warm heart and spread to the edges of her pretty ears:

'Oh, I am so glad to see you!'

But what I replied, or what we talked about for the next five minutes, I cannot recollect. My feelings towards the young lady had cooled down considerably with time; though, like the luminous cloud that is seen at night-time above Vesuvius, a tender glow of sentiment in my idle

moments still reflected the passion that lay dormant in my breast; but now the sound of her musical voice, the touch of her soft hand, and the sight of her, set all my heart aflame.

She wore—as I found out afterwards, for at that time I saw nothing but her sparkling eyes—a gipsy hat of some white straw, tied with a blue silk handkerchief beneath her chin. Her dark silky hair was arranged in soft curls upon her white brow, and a tiny ringlet from the nape of her neck peeped coquettishly from the edge of her bonnet. Her dress was of white muslin over a blue silk; her gloves were of the newest mode, being long and loose, of a delicate turquoise blue kid, reaching to the elbow; and her tippet of white satin, which fell no lower than the lace edge of her short sleeves, was lined with blue of the same shade. These particulars I noticed, wondering if it was her

dress that lent a charm to her, or she that made the dress more attractive than that of any other well-dressed young gentlewoman I had ever seen.

I withdrew from the door when Mr. Adams came up with Lord Kestral, and stood at a little distance, regarding my simpering relative with feelings of the most homicidal character. My friends were just the sort of people he would like to know. He had already made himself agreeable to Mr. Adams. He would sponge upon them, flatter them, and, behind their backs, ridicule the simple habits of Mr. Adams and the unworldly ideas of Miss Adams amongst his own particulars. It seemed to me, in the exalted state of my mind at that moment, a sacrilege that he should address Miss Adams in terms of equality. I regretted that I had introduced him to Mr. Adams, that I had not rather

taken means to prevent any acquaintance between them ; if, at that moment, my wish could have swept him to perdition, his mortal career would have terminated there and then.

‘ I must introduce you to my daughter, sir,’ said Mr. Adams. ‘ My daughter Delia, sir ; my love, Mr. Falkland’s uncle.’

It was some satisfaction to my jealous spirit to know that his lordship would not relish this distinction.

Lord Kestral made some washed-out compliment, to which Miss Adams replied with much vivacity—though I forget what she said—and then, peeping round the corner, she said to me :

‘ You are coming home with us, aren’t you ?’

‘ My dear,’ said Mr. Adams, ‘ we must first know if Mr. Falkland is not engaged to his uncle.’

‘ I am perfectly free,’ said I ; and with

haste added, 'My lord has already given me my *congée*, having a visit to pay to friends in Soho.'

'Well,' says Mr. Adams, 'I'm for doing by my neighbour as I would have him do by me; so I won't try to persuade your uncle to come with us to Park Lane instead of going to his older friends in Soho. Nevertheless, I shall hope to see you, sir, at my house whenever you feel disposed to visit us. We are at home every Tuesday and Saturday; and if you do us the honour of coming with our other friends, I promise you shall find the best of everything at your service.'

I know that my uncle was exceedingly mortified at this result of my intervention, for he would have liked nothing better than to rest his legs in a chariot and spend his evening in a well-furnished house so near his lodgings; whereas now he must walk

home, or go to the expense of hiring a coach if he found one ; for as to visiting friends in Soho, that was clearly an excuse to get rid of me in passing through a genteel quarter, seeing that, if he really had friends in that neighbourhood, the hour was too late to permit of his calling upon them in a promiscuous fashion. He cast a malignant glance at me ; but otherwise he kept his countenance admirably, despite his disappointment, accepting the prospective invitation with a condescending grace and a kind of ‘I-will-if-I-can air,’ and smiling blandly as he saw Mr. Adams and me sink into the luxuriously cushioned seats. He stood on the footway, with one hand in his breast and his best leg turned out, until the chariot began to move, when he lifted his hat with an elegance which Lord Chesterfield himself would have envied.

Mr. Adams replied to this salute with a

series of genial little nods, and, putting his head out of the window when we were some yards off, cried, ‘Don’t forget Tuesday night, squire!’

‘Squire!’ Had his lordship been called by the nickname of his boyhood, he could not have suffered a greater outrage.

For my part, as we drove off and I found myself alone in the presence of these two agreeable friends, and face to face with one whose eyes seemed to reflect my own happiness, I forgot all about my uncle, and a sensation of indescribable relief and delight filled my mind.





## CHAPTER XI.

MR. ADAMS AND HIS DAUGHTER IN TOWN.

‘**H**AVE you dined yet, sir?’ asked Mr. Adams with sudden anxiety, as we neared his house.

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘on Sunday I take my meals at my lodgings, and eat when it pleases my landlady to serve me. To-day I dined at two.’

‘I’m glad of it, for though I warrant the larder is not empty, I could have offered you nothing in style. On week-days we take our dinner at supper-time, and our supper for lunch the next morning. ’Tis

the fashion, sir, and so I like it ; but I make it a rule, as we have no visitors on Sunday, to live that day in a homely fashion and dine at mid-day, that the cook may have rest for one afternoon in the week. If I was a servant, I should feel it a hardship to have to work all days alike and never get a holiday ; and it seems to me that if our servants do their best to please us, we ought to go out of our way a bit to please them nows and thens.'

Miss Adams raised her pretty eyebrows, and looked out of the window with a little air of dissatisfaction for a minute ; and then, turning to me, she said :

‘Do you like dining at mid-day ?’

‘’Tis a matter of great indifference to me,’ said I. ‘When I am at work I eat when I am hungry, and I enjoy my food then.’

‘That’s it, sir !’ cried Mr. Adams. ‘Lord !

what can be better, when you've done a good spell of work, and feel a sort of craving, to sit down and eat, and cock your eye at what you've done, and remark with pride what part of your work is done well, and what will be the better for a touch here or a touch there?"

'Do you still drink out of a stone bottle?' asked Miss Adams, with a little laugh and a little sarcasm.

'When I am thirsty.'

Miss Adams looked at me for an instant without smiling, and then turned to the window with that slight air of haughty contempt that had amused me in the church; whilst Mr. Adams nudged me, and winked as if to discontinue the conversation, which was unpleasant to the young lady. But, like a spoilt child who has given way to temper and repents, she turned round, after looking at the road for

two minutes, and, with the most winning smile, said :

‘ Let us talk of something pleasant—shall we ?’

And so ended that little exhibition of temper.

‘ ’Tis the best house I could get,’ said Mr. Adams, when we were in the hall, and Miss Adams had gone upstairs to see to her toilet. ‘ There’s a dook and duchess o’ one side, and a markis and his family on the other ; but they don’t seem particular’y neighbourly. There’s no chatting over the walls, nor dropping in now and then in a friendly way ; though I don’t think there’s much to find fault with now. Our Tuesdays and Saturdays seem to be very well liked ; you’d be quite astonished at the quantity of refreshments we manage to get through. Quite a lot of people come, you know, though we have only been

open about three weeks. Tip-top people, I can assure you, wonderful fine folks indeed!—sir this and the honourable that—and one introduces another, and so we go on. And they seem to be very happy and talkative—among themselves. Of course, I can't understand one half they chat about; and they don't take much interest in the crops, which rather binds us up when we happen to be in a group; so I leaves them pretty much to themselves, and only cut in now and then when I can think of something new to say about the weather, or wish to call their attention to a brand of wine that the merchant partic'lar'y recommends. I do my best to make 'em comfortable; and I've made up my mind to take no notice if I think they're laughing at me. It suits Delia, and that's everything. She likes the excitement and movement, as 'tis

natural a young creature full of life and spirits should. *She* gets on very well. The people have always got enough to say to her, and somehow she finds quite as much to say to them without even going nigh the weather for a subject. She's beloved, as she deserves to be, by the male sex. We don't receive many females; and a good job too, say I, for they're more bound up than their husbands—that stiff, there's no unbending 'em anyhow. Lord, sir, you'd think the house was theirs, and that they'd hired me, to see how they accept any little services I can do 'em. But what does that matter? If you are pleased with the beautiful shapes and colours in a peep-glass, 'tis absurd to feel disappointed because when you take it to pieces you find nothing but a quantity of little worthless, uninteresting bits of coloured glass. And so long as Delia is pleased with the peep-

glass she shall have it. What do you think of the house, sir ?

The hall was spacious, well lit, furnished, and decorated with many rare and beautiful objects of art. I had seated myself in one of the low cushioned chairs, and Mr. Adams had seated himself upon the arm of another. I expressed my admiration of what I saw.

‘ ’Tis nothing to the other rooms. Would you like to look at them while we are waiting for Delia ?’

‘ With great pleasure,’ said I, curious to see how people so new to the fashionable world had furnished their house.

Mr. Adams opened a door, and we entered a room which fairly amazed me ; for it was unlike any other room I had ever seen. There were no two things alike in it, and no attempt had been made to furnish it with ordinary regularity. The floor was covered with Indian carpets and skins ;

there were Venetian mirrors against the walls, cabinets and tables of the most exquisite design and finish from Italian and French workshops, divans and settees of Moorish make, hangings of Persian stuff, vases of china, of Sevres, and of Mr. Wedgewood's incomparable ware ; in a word, there were the richest products of art and industry, from all quarters of the world, collected together ; and yet, despite their incongruity, there seemed nothing out of place or inappropriate to the room, and the effect of the whole was delightful to the eye. This was due to the consummate taste with which those appointments and decorations were arranged. It was such a room as one might expect—a person of natural artistic taste, ignorant of conventional styles, with unbounded scope and choice of materials, being the composer. That the artist was a woman one must also

conclude, from the quantity of flowers distributed about. Wherever flowers could be introduced there they were, and the air was perfumed with their scent.

‘I need not tell you, sir,’ said Mr. Adams, ‘that my daughter furnished the house after her own ideas.’

‘’Twas what I expected,’ said I.

‘The upholsterers would have persuaded her to make a museum or a gallery to put all these beautiful objects in, and to furnish the rooms according to their fashions. “I am going to live in this house, not you,” says she, as proud as a queen. After that they did as she bade them, without a murmur. She bought nearly everything you see when we were on our travels abroad.’

Mr. Adams opened a door, and we passed into a second room which was no less striking than the first; for as that was remarkable for its gorgeous and profuse ornamentation,

so was this for its simplicity. Here the floor was waxed and polished in the French mode ; at the upper end was one of the new *pianofortes* and a harp. A low settee, covered with pale blue satin, skirted the walls, from which it was removed by the width of a marble shelf level with the top of the back, on which lay divers books and cases of prints. There was no movable furniture in the room, nor any ornament, save Venetian mirrors placed at intervals, with pictures between.

‘ We dance here,’ said Mr. Adams, in a tone of solemnity which was not out of keeping with the severity of the chamber, and the serious character which a performance of that kind would naturally have for a man with such legs and feet as his.

A short passage led us into a spacious and very handsomely built greenhouse that ran along the back of the house, and brought

the two rooms on the right of the hall in communication with the two on the left. The greenhouse was well filled with flowers, and in the midst was an aviary of small singing birds. Mr. Adams was more at home here, and as he took up a pot now and then to nip off a faded flower or a dead leaf, he recovered his genial and familiar tone, which he had lost in passing through the music and dancing-room.

‘I spend a good deal of my time here,’ said he, slipping some withered foliage in his pocket for want of a more suitable receptacle for the litter; ‘for though there’s a garden out there, ’tis no pleasure to me to walk in it. Fancy a garden, sir, with not a cabbage in it! Nothing but potted-out plants and gravel paths. A garden all flowers, to me, is like a dinner of nothing but sweetmeats. I like to turn my eyes from the flowers to the cabbages, and from the

cabbages to the flowers. One sets off the other, and together they fill the mind with a consciousness of God's bounty and His tender care for the meanest as for the noblest of our wants. Lord, sir, of all pictures I love the Dutch ; for there you see that the artist was not limited in his ideas of what is good and beautiful. Look at their cabbages, sir ; you can fancy it possible to break the crisp leaf and smell the wholesome fragrance. To my mind, a row of good healthy round cabbages are as handsome as e'er a row of your verbenias or calcilariouses. Not as I would say a word against flowers, which are faultless in their place, as we see 'em here, and lovely mingled, as we see 'em in nature, amidst the tender green of a grazing field, or in the banks amongst the little herbs where sheep delight to snatch a dainty mouthful as they pass ; but what I can't abide is a garden which is nought but streaks

of gravel and flowers—a garden without cabbages.’

‘ Won’t cabbages grow there ?’

‘ I don’t believe they *would*,’ he said, with a laugh. ‘ But Lord, sir, I could no more plant cabbages in my garden than I could smoke a clay pipe in it. Tisn’t genteel, and Miss Dobson tells me the whole neighbourhood would be scandalized by such a proceeding. One can’t so much as sneeze without being noticed by the dook o’ one side or the markis o’ t’other.’

While Mr. Adams talked he trimmed the plants as we passed along, culling here and there a choice flower ; and now he paused to arrange them with a few sprigs of foliage, and bind them into a little nosegay with a strip of bast fished out of his breeches-pocket. He had just finished this—seemingly to his satisfaction, as he held it at a distance, and regarded it with one eye and

his head on one side—when there was a rustle at the end of the greenhouse, and Miss Adams stood before us. She had changed her dress for a sack of primrose satin, trimmed with violet. Diamonds sparkled in her ears, around her throat, upon her bosom, and in the violet ribbons on her wrists. Her dress suggested, in an opulent fashion, the blooms and showers of April, and she stood waiting for us with a smile of triumph, as if she knew how beautiful she looked, and how she must be admired. Her fingers were knitted before her ; her bare arms looked like sculptured ivory.

‘ Is there e’er a flower that blows so sweet as she ?’ Mr. Adams asked of me in a low tone ; then he went to her, and gave her the little nosegay he had made, and she flung her arms about his neck and kissed him, impetuously like a child, and then

glanced archly at me to see if I was not envious of his good fortune. I fancy she was pleased with what expression she found in my face, for her eyes lost nothing of their radiant happiness.

‘Faith, dear,’ said Mr. Adams, ‘that is the prettiest dress I have seen you in for a week. Pray, sir,’ added he, turning to me, ‘have the heathens ne’er a goddess of Spring amongst the number that they worship?’

‘None, sir,’ I replied, ‘or they had worshipped her alone.’

Miss Adams made me a bow, and took my arm as well as her father’s as we walked from the greenhouse into the dining-room.

‘I love the springtide above all seasons,’ said Mr. Adams.

‘With its capricious changefulness, its storms, and sullen days,’ said Miss Adams, with mock horror.

‘Aye, with all its faults,’ cried Mr.

Adams; 'for they are but the wayward temper of youth, that one knows will yield to time, and they do but lend a greater charm to the days of sunny brightness and promise. And in thee, my dear, with thy dress of primrose and violet, and thy face of innocence and bright cheery vigour, I seem to see all that is lovable in spring.'

'You are my dearest dear,' murmured she, rising on tiptoe to kiss his leaden-hued cheek.

We passed through the dining-room, and so into the breakfast-parlour, where Miss Dobson was sitting in prim state before the table on which tea was set.

'We live chiefly in this room,' said Mr. Adams, 'and that is why you find Delia's portrait here;' and he pointed to the cast I had given him, which hung over the chimneypiece.

'Have you thanked Mr. Falkland for his present, my dear?' asked Miss Dobson.

‘Mr. Falkland wouldn’t give me an opportunity of thanking him when I wished to, and since then I have lost the inclination,’ said Miss Adams cavalierly ; then, after a moment’s pause, she looked up at me reproachfully, and said, ‘Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.’

‘I did not intend it for you,’ said I ; ‘’twas made for myself, and given to Mr. Adams.’

‘And so I told her,’ said Mr. Adams, ‘but she would have it she must thank you for it, and off she went to find you ; and when she came back after her fruitless errand——’

‘Sugar, Mr. Adams?’ said Miss Dobson.

‘Why, there was a hend of it,’ said Mr. Adams, adroitly finishing his story, as, understanding Miss Dobson’s hint, he glanced across the table and perceived that Miss Adams was bending over her cup to conceal the flush of colour which had suffused her

face to the temples. 'Thank you, ma'am, I will take sugar.'

Mr. Adams enjoyed his tea heartily, seeming to appreciate the freedom of talking with me upon subjects which possibly his new acquaintance would not listen to patiently. To me it was a real pleasure to listen to his simple talk of crops, and pigs, and poultry, and his honest, common-sense remarks upon the subject which he knew thoroughly. Only once did Miss Dobson interrupt conversation by asking for his cup, and that was when he got upon the question of manures and their application to the soil. It pleased me also to see the kindly interest that his daughter manifested in the discussion, of which she knew nothing, and must have disliked but for his sake. I perceived also that she had no taste for the meal we were taking, and that she sipped her tea and put food to her lips only when she

thought his eyes were upon her. These little concessions proved to me that indulgence had not spoiled the affectionate disposition of her heart.

When tea was ended, we crossed the hall and entered the drawing-room, which was now lit up with many wax candles, and looked more handsome than ever. The exquisite beauty of everything on which the eye rested ; the tasteful combination of rich colours and perfect forms ; the glitter of light as it fell upon cut crystal, enamels, porcelain, and fretted metals ; the union of richness and splendour in art with the simplicity and tenderness of growing flowers, and withal the perfect harmony in which these various objects were blended together, renewed my admiration and astonishment. It seemed to me like a chamber in an enchanted palace, such as I had read of in ‘Tales of the Arabian Nights,’ or in the

fantastic stories of the Countess d'Anois, but could not realize as existing except in the poet's fancy. When Miss Adams seated herself on a deep, throne-like chair covered with embossed purple velvet, the deception was complete ; there sat the princess in the midst of her splendours.

‘Fore J'ovah's, if you please, Miss Dobson,’ said Mr. Adams, seating himself with an air of tranquil delight.

I was at a loss to understand the meaning of this strange request, until Miss Dobson, having passed into the adjoining room and seated herself at the piano, began to play a sacred piece which I recognised as ‘Before Jehovah's awful Throne.’

‘I do like to listen to sacred music o' Sundays,’ said Mr. Adams to me, in a low tone. ‘It kind of loosens the heart, and makes one feel how much there is to be grateful for in this world. And I can't tell you how happy

I feel now—almost too happy, for I fear 'tis more than I have a right to expect.'

Miss Adams rose from her seat, and coming to us, put her hand on her father's shoulder, and asked what he was talking about.

'I was saying, sweetheart, how happy this music makes me.'

'Then it shall be of my playing,' said she, with sudden jealousy; and, Miss Dobson being come to the end of her performance, she took her seat at the pianoforte and played. Mr. Adams and I followed her into the room, and watched her.

I know not what it was she played, for she had no music; it was some quaint old hymn tune that her father liked, and it stirred her heart as it stirred ours, for her face wore an aspect of pathetic tenderness as the melody flowed on, and all unconsciously she began to sing the words to

which the tune was put, in a low and rich contralto. But her mood quickly changed, and she proceeded to play snatches of livelier tunes, without any connection, until Miss Dobson reminded her that it was Sunday; when she rose from her seat in a pet, flung away from the instrument, and took me round the room to look at the pictures, leaving the elder lady to repeat ‘Fore J’ovah’s’ for her own and Mr. Adams’s amusement. But here, again, her amiable disposition asserted itself; she looked at the pictures in an absent manner for a few minutes, and suddenly left me, to run back to the pianoforte and kiss her governess; after that atonement for her hastiness, she came back to my side and gave herself up, heart and soul, to the enjoyment of the paintings.

‘What do you do with the pictures you paint?’ I asked, for there were none upon the walls.

‘Keep them in my work-room,’ she answered. ‘I don’t want anyone to see them—except papa, and Miss Dobson, and you, until I know whether they are good or bad. I hate to be flattered—that is,’ she said, checking herself conscientiously, ‘I hate to find I have been flattered for something that didn’t deserve flattery. I will show you everything I have done; and I won’t be angry even if you laugh at my work.’

‘I shall never do that,’ said I.

‘Not if a pillar gets in my way, or I try to match the colours of nature as if they were the bows of a bonnet?’ she asked slyly.

‘No,’ said I. ‘If you did what you knew was not right in art, or anything else, I might be very sorry, or very angry; but I could not laugh at that.’

She looked up at me as a few minutes before I had seen her look at a picture which we both admired; but she said

nothing, and we continued to regard the paintings for some moments in silence. Then she said :

‘ I cut up that picture as you advised me to do, and I’ve tried to paint in harmony with my feelings.’

‘ To your satisfaction ?’

‘ I think so—but I failed terribly the first time. My goldfinch was neglected, and it died, and I can’t tell you how I suffered. Then I thought, now is the time to paint a pathetic picture, and I tried to paint my dead goldfinch ; but I couldn’t—every stroke of the brush seemed to cut into my heart.’

‘ So you gave it up ?’

‘ Yes ; ’twas useless to continue——’

‘ And then——’

‘ I set to work upon a pot of heartsease that papa in his thoughtful, loving way brought to give me comfort ; and as I painted, the flowers seemed to smile at me

and I felt such relief and pleasure in my work that—I think 'tis the best picture I have ever painted. But you shall see it, and we will have long talks about pictures and statues—there's a prodigious deal I want to tell you. And you will come very often now, won't you ?

‘As often as I may.’

She took my arm—it was her method of expressing gratitude, I saw—and gave a little sigh of satisfaction, like a child who gains her own way and sees the near realization of her wishes.





## CHAPTER XII.

A BROAD HINT IS DROPPED BY MR. ADAMS,  
AND CAUGHT BY FALKLAND.

**T**HE hours slipped away so agreeably that I took no note of them, and might have continued to let them pass in the same manner had not Miss Dobson, looking at her watch, said :

‘I positively think my watch must have stopped. Will you have the goodness, Mr. Falkland, to give me the correct time ? for I cannot believe it is but twenty minutes past one.’

‘Twenty minutes past one !’ , we ex-

claimed, all in one breath, incredulously. 'Surely, ma'am, your watch has advanced rather than stopped,' I added. And so thought both Mr. Adams and his daughter, until on comparing their watches it was found that she was substantially correct, being only ten minutes fast.

I rose and bade Miss Adams good-night at once, but best part of another hour slipped away before we finally separated, and in that time we shook hands fully half a dozen times to part; but the little siren had the art to make an observation or ask a question at the very last moment which provoked discussion and kept us lingering on, to the great distress of Miss Dobson, who flitted about in the background with a chamber-candlestick like a perturbed somnambulist.

Miss Adams would have had the carriage brought out for me; but as the night was fine, I preferred to walk home, and Mr.

Adams insisted upon accompanying me, saying that, like the ghosts, he could walk after midnight. Mr. Adams linked his arm in mine, and, after expatiating upon the beauty of the night and the delight of stretching one's legs, he lapsed into silence, and we both walked for some time without saying one word. I think our thoughts were occupied on the same subject ; I know well that I could not disengage myself from the memory of the sweet girl, whose parting ' Good-night ' haunted my mind like the recollection of a strain of music mutely repeating itself again and again.

' Would it be impertinent to ask you, sir, if you are connected with the Falkland family who lived in the house at Maplehurst which is now mine ? ' asked Mr. Adams. ' If 'tis a question you would rather not answer, I beg you to tell me so, and to forgive me for my imprudence.'

‘I have no reason to conceal the fact,’ said I. ‘It was my father’s house, and was sold at his death. I was born there, and lived there until I was eighteen.’

‘Then Delia was right. We saw as clear as could be that you were a gentleman by birth; and she was sure, by your manner, that the house was familiar to you, and that you loved it for something more than its good looks. Then she found out from the folks in the village that Mr. Falkland and his son had gone abroad, and that you had been engaged by accident, as it were, to repair the stone in the church; and so, putting one thing and another together, she hit upon the truth, you see, sir.’

Knowing that idle curiosity had not prompted Mr. Adams to ask for a confirmation of this suspicion, I asked him point-blank for his motive.

‘Why, sir,’ said he, with a little confusion,

‘I was thinking to myself how grievous it must have been to you to see your old house in the possession of strangers, and how happy you would be if the house should come again into your hands—which is quite possible,’ he hastened to explain, ‘seeing that you are bound to make your fortune with your talents and your energy.’

‘Even then it will depend upon your will to dispose of the property.’

‘Have no fear on that point, sir; for lucky as I count myself to have such a genteel house, I should consider myself more lucky still in turning it over to you. I would rather be your guest in that house than your host, I do assure you. I promise you, sir, there shall not be a brick in that house altered.’

I thanked him as best I could for his kindness—inadequately, so far as my feelings were represented—for I could not

but marvel at his abounding generosity. I expected after this that he would ask some questions about my occupation—which had only once during the evening been mentioned ; but his thoughts were evidently upon another track, for when he again spoke it was on a subject remote from that we had been discussing.

‘ You don’t know Captain Hasher, I suppose, Mr. Falkland ?’

‘ I have not that pleasure.’

‘ Nor the Honourable Mr. Sparks ?’

‘ No.’

‘ Ah, I thought not ; they are scarcely in your way. You’ll see ’em on Tuesday. They’ve took a wonderful fancy to me, but somehow I don’t seem to be able to take quite such a fancy to them. I can’t tell you why, sir, but I don’t. They are very much liked, and I’ve never heard a word against ’em ; but still, you know, I don’t take to

them as they take to me. They brought a horse round for me, and would have me go for a canter with 'em ; and when I came a cropper—never having rode a horse in my life before—they didn't laugh like all the rest of the spectators, but fetched a coach and took me home, and wouldn't leave me till I'd been examined by a surgeon. That was very considerate, you know.'

I assented, wondering what sort of villains they were in appearance.

'Yet hang me if I can like 'em,' he observed.

'Does Miss Adams share your antipathy?' I asked, with jealous hope.

'No, I don't think she dislikes 'em. They are very attentive to her, very lively, very submissive, and chuck-full of compliments, so it isn't natural she should find fault with 'em.'

'She likes them, in fact.'

'Well, yes, sir. I think I may say she likes 'em better than any of the others.

You'll see, sir, on Tuesday ; they swarm about her like bees about a ripe peach. There's a meaning in that, of course, though I doubt if Delia sees it. They amuse her, and I believe it would be all the same if they were just so many bears and monkeys. In some things she is still quite a child. I am sure she does not know what love really is, though she hears such a lot about it—with their hearts and darts, and cupids and flames, and I know not what all.' Mr. Adams spoke with great disgust in his tone. 'As she understands love, 'tis admiration on the part of the man, and on hers an affection of the kind she feels for me ; and there's not one amongst 'em for whom she cares so much as she does for old Miss Dobson. But the change is coming, sir. There's signs of it which haven't escaped me. I can see it just as I could see the change in the bud on an apple-tree before the bloom bursts. And 'tis

a critical moment in a woman's life, as 'tis in the smaller matter of a flowering tree. The day is close at hand when she will be a woman and no longer a child, and all her love for flowers, and singing birds, and painting, and music—aye, even her affection for me—will be as nothing at all to her love for the man she is to wed. And that's why I am fearful when I see her more partial to this man than that, and why I wanted to know something about Captain Hasher and the Honourable Mr. Sparks, for fear she should take and give her heart, with all its treasures, to some one who isn't worthy to have it.'

'Is it not possible to lessen the risk by shutting your doors against men like the two you have mentioned whom you dislike?' I asked.

Mr. Adams reflected sufficiently long for me to see the folly of my suggestion, which

was made at the impulse of jealousy, before he replied :

‘No, sir,’ said he ; ‘I may be wrong, but I cannot think you are right ; nor do I think you would do otherwise than I am doing, was you in my place, and did you know Delia as I do. You may be sure I gave this matter much consideration before I resolved to quit the country, and bring my child into this kind of life ; and I argue, sir, that you can’t make a plant grow straight and healthy by merely bracing and tying of it up ; you can do more by giving it freedom and air, and nourishing the healthy growth of its roots. I believe that in all healthy young girls there is a tendency to do right, and that we underrate their wisdom by overrating our own. But for a girl to do right and be wise, she must know the difference between the bad and the good, and that she can only know by comparing the one with

the other. If Delia has not already found out how worthless and contemptible are the Pinks and Jackanapes who make fools of themselves to please her, believe me she will the moment she compares them with a man of sense and feeling. Oh, I have no fear,' he added, with the conviction of his own argument. 'Delia has too much pride to accept either Captain Hasher or the Honourable Mr. Sparks.'

'That depends, according to your own theory, upon the existence of a better man amongst the number of her admirers.'

'Oh, he exists,' replied Mr. Adams, laughing, 'or I am greatly mistaken in the looks of things.'

This hint was so broad that I could no longer be in doubt as to the good man's drift, though I protest it was so entirely unanticipated that I could not for some time realize the fact. A beggar may look at a banquet

with covetous eyes, and yet never flatter himself with the hope that he may be invited to sit down to it.

Years of adversity had used me to regard my position as one which could be improved only by a long term of patient study and work; as for marriage, I had looked upon that as I had looked upon Fame—as a golden possibility of the future, uncertain of attainment, and entirely dependent upon favouring conditions. Not for one moment had I contemplated the possibility of marrying Miss Adams. I had fallen in love with her at first sight, without considering whether she was maid or wife. It would have made no difference to my feelings then had she been married,—my case had been no more hopeless. But as my reason would have restrained me from encouraging that love with dishonourable hopes, so in the present case it

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had forbidden me to think of altering the relation in which we stood. Yet now at this hint, so readily did my understanding accommodate itself to my inclination, I saw nothing preposterous in the idea of making Miss Adams my wife. In birth and education I was at least her equal. Probably she would receive a large fortune from her father, but I saw no reason for making this an impediment to our marriage. My tastes would never permit me to live idle, and while I worked I should be able to maintain my feeling of freedom and independence; at the same time, she would be free to spend every penny of her fortune as she chose. Of course we must wait; I already took it for granted that she *would* wait. I could not marry on a salary of two pounds a week, terminable at three months; but Mr. Rogers, who seemed thoroughly content with my work, would doubtless double my wages in

re-engaging me, and by the end of the year I might fairly expect to execute some piece of work on my own account which would be saleable, and that would lead to greater things. And my thoughts still running on in this manner, I fell to calculating the sum of money I should have in three or four years, and wondering if that would be sufficient to justify me in demanding Miss Adams's hand. My fancy, which up to the present I had kept under control, had now got the reins out of my holding and fairly bolted with me.

As I made no response to Mr. Adams's hint, he pursued the subject no further; indeed, I believe the poor fellow imagined, from my subsequent silence, that he had gone too far, for he spoke scarcely a word during the rest of our walk—a fact which gave me no concern at the time—and when we stopped to part, he said in a tone of anxiety :

‘I do trust, sir, that I have said nought this evening to give you offence.’

‘Offence!’ cried I, grasping his hand; ‘I consider that you have given me the highest mark of respect and confidence that I could possibly receive.’

‘I intended nothing less, I assure you, sir,’ said Mr. Adams impressively; ‘and ’tis a further proof of my esteem that I spoke out my mind without either premeditation or reserve. Indeed, sir, I am thinking that such outspokenness is scarcely genteel; but, faith, I find it harder by a vast degree to conceal my thoughts from a man whom I take to be honest and good, than to speak at all openly with a man I mistrust.’

We shook hands cordially, and separated, he returning to Park Lane, and I betaking myself to my bed. And I verily believe that had my pillow been a billet of wood, it would not have impaired the sweetness of my sleep that night.



## CHAPTER XIII.

LORD KESTRAL'S INTEREST IN MR. ADAMS ; HIS  
EFFORTS TO SAVE HIM FROM HIS FRIENDS.

**I** ROSE with the lark the following morning, and astonished myself no less than my landlady by singing a song which was popular at Oxford when I was a commoner there, and which I believe had never recurred to me since then. My temper was neither sad nor morose, but I had grown quiet and grave, prematurely perhaps, by solitude, long hours of work, and the absence of gaiety from my life. When I was well pleased with my work I would unconsciously fall a-humming ;

but here I found myself bellowing out a song with all the overflowing spirit of a careless lad.

Doubtless Mrs. Jilks conceived that my happiness was the result of having discovered my uncle, and seeing me on the highway to fortune, felt more kindly disposed towards me than before; in proof of which she sent up a herring with my breakfast, and a polite message begging me to accept it, as she had received a box from her brother at Yarmouth.

In the course of the morning I called upon the tailor who was making my new suit, and exacted a promise from him that it should be sent to my lodgings that night. At the same time I bought a pair of new shoes, a very handsome frilled shirt, a pair of black silk stockings, and a new riband for my hair. I believe no girl could have felt more pleasure in the prospect of wearing a fresh

gown, than I had in thinking of the figure I should cut in my new finery; and the moment my work at the studio was finished, I hastened home with a view of trying on my suit.

‘Lord Kestral desires to see you; his lordship bade me tell you the moment you arrived,’ said my landlady, mouthing my uncle’s title like an unctuous morsel, as she opened the door to me.

‘Is he upstairs?’ I asked, heartily wishing him at the bottom of the sea.

‘No; his lordship is in his own apartment’—and, she added, dropping her voice to a low and confidential tone, ‘Taken my parlour-floor—must be near you—offered me a year’s rent in advance—didn’t take it, you may be sure.’

‘More fool you,’ thought I, as I gloomily left my landlady and went to the parlour.

I found my uncle in a somewhat faded

but very elegantly brocaded night-gown, reclining in an elbow-chair, with a copy of the *Times* on his knee and a bottle of Madeira upon the table at his side.

‘ Ah ! my dear, glad to see you,’ he said with urbanity, as he held out a couple of fingers without altering his position in the chair. ‘ “ Omnia vincit amor, et nos cedamus amori ;” ’ as we used to say. Here we are united under one roof.’

‘ I had no notion, sir, that you intended leaving your lodgings in Bond Street,’ said I coldly.

‘ Nor I—take a seat, my dear—until this morning, when my man Pilcher told me that the woman of this house was anxious to let her parlour-floor to a person of quality ; it struck me at once that here was a chance of doing you a service. And the rascal of whom I have rented my late lodgings for five years coming at that moment with his

bill, and giving his tongue undue liberty when I declined to pay, I took the opportunity to punish his ingratitude by bidding him find a more suitable tenant at once. I came here ; the room suited me ; the woman behaved herself with becoming civility ; I sent Pilcher to fetch away my possessions—which, by-the-bye, are but a beggarly account of empty boxes—and entered into possession without more ado.'

'I fail to see how your presence here is to benefit me,' said I, giving free vent to my ill-humour.

'What! D'ye forget our conversation yesterday? Have you forgot all I promised to do for you?'

'No, my lord ; but apparently you forget that I refused to have any share in your project.'

'If I do, 'tis because your refusal is not worth remembering ; and because,

as a man of the world, I consider myself a better judge than you of what is to your advantage. To begin with, no man in London can rise to eminence without patrons. 'Tis the wealthy alone who can purchase your works, and they will have nothing to do with you if 'tis known that you have declined the friendship and assistance of your uncle from no explicable motive, except that of a churlish contempt for the aristocracy. Mind, I do not threaten—far be it from me, whatever treatment I receive at your hands, to cry down your talents and sneer at your character; I only wish you to see clearly what must be the inevitable consequence of your neglecting my proposal. I am a little too old to be hurt by ingratitude, my dear; but I feel hurt to think that my nephew should be tainted with so mean a vice.'

‘My lord!’ cried I, springing from my chair.

‘Did I hesitate to put my hand in my pocket when I met you in the Park, and thought you needed my help? Did I decline to accept your boiled mutton? Did I conceal my circumstances from you? Did I not at once offer you my help? Have I failed in any respect to do for you the best that lay in my power?’

I was constrained to apologize to my uncle for my shortcomings, though I was conscious of doing so with a bad grace; for I saw nothing in his conduct which might not have been done with perfect selfishness on his part.

‘Let us say not another word,’ said my uncle. ‘We understand each other now. Take a glass from amongst that rubbish on the sideboard, and give me your opinion of this Madeira. I am giving the local trades-

men a trial.' (I imagined what sort of trial it would be for them.) 'And now let us talk about our prospects. By-the-bye, it seems you have already set your foot on the first step of the ladder. You told me nothing about these friends of yours—the Adamsses. I have heard speak of the man—a well-meaning, profuse, rather vulgar person, I am told. Made his money, like so many others, in trade—candles, I hear; and left Thames Street to live in Park Lane. Unfortunately, these people can never quite get rid of the smell of the shop. I suppose, now, his talk is of markets and tallow, eh?'

'I never heard him mention either.'

'He shows better taste than I expected, then. 'Tis strange how locality will cling to a man. Have you ever noticed that, my dear?'

'I can't say that I have.'

'Now this Adams, who has lived best

part of his life, as we know, in Thames Street, don't you find him popping the Monument and Fish-street Hill into his observations very frequently ?

‘ On the contrary, sir ; if one were to judge of his habits by his observations, you would say that he had lived in the country all his life, and given his thoughts to cultivation.’

‘ That’s curious !’ said my uncle, who was holding his glass between the light and his eye. He tossed off the contents, and asked me, smacking his lips, what I thought of it.

I replied I thought it was very good wine.

‘ And how did you come to know this tallow-merchant ?’ he asked, half filling his glass.

I gave him as brief an outline of the facts as I could.

‘ Well, my dear,’ said he, when he had

heard all he could get from me on that subject, 'you are to be congratulated. You have by an extraordinary series of accidents arrived, in a few days, at a position which months of patient endeavour might have failed to attain. One object of this tallow-merchant' (it seemed to me that my uncle took a pleasure in constantly referring to Mr. Adams's former trade as some sort of retaliation for being dubbed 'Squire' the evening before)—'of this tallow-merchant is to marry his daughter well. The ambition of these men is to marry their children into aristocratic families—families with a title, if possible. Now, I should not be in the least surprised if this Mr. Adams will do all he can to make up a match between his daughter and you, now that he finds you are my heir. Money is no object to him, of course; but rank and breeding are. A self-made man has never any

family—you have not heard of any relatives of position?

‘None.’

‘Ha!’—my uncle emptied his glass again—‘he would have let you know if he had any. Was one inclined to be jocose, it might be said that a self-made man has no need of ancestors—he, he!’ He wiped a tear from the corner of his eye, and took up the thread of his discourse. ‘As I was saying, he hopes, by the prettiness of his daughter—for I perceived she had a certain kind of prettiness of the middle-class sort—and by a good dowry, to obtain a footing in our circle of society. That is the idea of this Mr. John Adams—I think you told me his name is John?’

‘No; I do not know his Christian name.’

‘Not John! Egad, I could have sworn you said it was! My cursed memory is constantly playing me tricks of this kind.

Well, whether you marry the girl or not must depend upon your own inclination. But I trust you will be in no haste to snap up the first tempting bait laid in your way. With your figure, your prospects, and the position you will shortly make, you may easily form a creditable as well as profitable alliance. Miss Adams may be very charming, very amiable, and very fascinating, and Mr. Adams may do his very best to be agreeable, but——’

‘Sir,’ said I, rising in heat, for I could no longer sit tamely to hear my friends vilified, ‘you misapprehend the character of my friends entirely; and mine also, if you think it gives me any pleasure to hear you speak ill of a man, and he the most simple and honest I have ever met.’

‘Oh, you think him simple and honest! Then let me tell you I am delighted to hear

you confirm the opinion I had formed of him.'

My uncle spoke with such evident satisfaction that I was completely amazed. I could only account for this sudden change in his tone by supposing that he had purposely sneered at my friends with a view to eliciting my opinion of them.

'As to speaking ill of Mr. Adams,' he continued, 'nothing, I protest, is farther from my intention. It would be just as unwise to speak well of him in the present state of my knowledge. I have spoken to the man only once in my life, and I know nothing of him except at second-hand. I am not such a fool as to blame him for trying to rise above the level of tallow and Thames Street; I should consider him worthy only of contempt if he did not. Nor can you think I intend to cast a slur upon his character by supposing that he would like

to marry his daughter to you. And this is the sum of all I have said. Do you find anything to justify you in looking at me as if I were a fiend incarnate ?

I had no answer to make, for indeed, it was the manner rather than the matter of his discourse which offended me. My uncle allowed me to feel my discomfiture for a minute, and then he said :

‘ I am not ill-pleased to see you take the part of your friends so warmly, though perhaps I feel hurt that you have no indulgence for me. Sit down, my dear, and I may convince you that my disposition is not so sinister as you think it. I called in at Will’s this afternoon, with the purpose of finding out who and what this Mr. Adams is. Everybody had heard of him ; nobody knew him. Not one decent member of society visits him. You may smile incredulously, but the fact is self-evident.

The better sort of people decline to visit him, not because he himself is objectionable, but because the company he keeps is bad. His house is open to any rascal who chooses to go there, and all are welcomed without distinction. His rooms are crowded with a mob of needy adventurers, swindlers, sharpers, and thieves, who go there to bubble him out of his money. They have but to present a plausible scheme, and he supports it ; rotten speculations, sham subscriptions, worthless undertakings, he subscribes to with a reckless generosity that is not more ridiculous than it is culpable. He has given himself up a prey to wolves and jackals, and, mark me, they will not leave him till they have stripped him to the bone.'

My uncle spoke with fierce excitement, and wiped the perspiration from his face, without a thought of the pigment that came away with it.

‘This is hardly consistent,’ said I, ‘with his character as a successful merchant. Men who make money in trade owe it to the prudence of their transactions.’

‘That is true,’ replied my uncle, with a grisly smile ; ‘that is what I said to myself. We must suppose that he was prudent in tallow, and knew nothing of the world outside Thames Street. You say he is a simple, honest man ; that explains the matter sufficiently for us. Here are the facts : ignorant of society, he cannot distinguish between the real aristocracy and its base representatives ; by admitting the latter to his friendship he excludes the former from it, and, with not a hand to stay him, he is going helter-skelter to ruin. I was told only last week he gave a thousand guineas towards the abolition of slavery—a revolutionary and impious scheme that, thank God, will never be sanctioned by the

Government of this country while we have a Christian King at the head of it—and five hundred to a designing wretch who would destroy the industry of the country by some mechanical contrivance. These rascals play cards at his house ; and for high stakes, you may warrant, for the loser gets his note of hand cashed by Mr. Adams, who takes the worthless bit of paper as his sure gage for repayment. Money to this one, money to that one, wine to all—reckless extravagance and wicked waste everywhere ; the whole of that immense fortune being scattered with both hands to the rapacious horde that surrounds him. 'Tis frightful to think of !

Again my uncle wiped the moisture from his face, and hideous wrinkles showed themselves at the angles of his eyes, adding to the expression of greedy envy upon his face.

‘ But it must be stopped, this wholesale

pillage and devastation,' he cried, striking the elbow of his chair; 'and we must stop it at once, while there is yet something to be saved from the wreck!'

'If Mr. Adams is being imposed upon, it is only necessary to make him acquainted with the nature of those who are taking advantage of his simplicity——'

'Not so fast, not so fast!' said my uncle, throwing himself back in his chair, closing his eyes and knitting his brows. 'If we are too sudden, we shall ruin all. 'Tis the nature of such men to trust everyone implicitly, or trust no one at all. He is capable of turning us out with the rest; of shutting up his house, and flying off to the other end of the world. We must oust these adventurers one by one, and gradually introduce better people in their place.'

'How is that to be done?' I asked.

'How is that to be done?' he repeated, in

a tone as calm and deliberative as lately it had been tempestuous. 'In the first place, we must get women to visit the house. There is a stigma upon every society where men preponderate. At present no women visit that house but those who are compelled by their husbands or fathers to go, in order to support their schemes.'

'I cannot see how you will get women to go voluntarily amongst men of bad character.'

'If one goes, others will follow ; and Lady Kestral shall be the first. I will go to Southgate to-morrow morning and fetch her, and she shall accompany me in the evening. That will be the beginning.'

I was astounded. Was it possible that Lord Kestral had resolved upon this extraordinary measure out of consideration for the Adamses or for me ? I looked in his face, and saw no trace of philanthropy there.



## CHAPTER XIV.

L A D Y   K E S T R A L .

**M**Y uncle said no more : he kept his eyes closed, and presently gave signs of having fallen asleep. Possibly he adopted this simple means of terminating an explanation which he thought was sufficient for his present purposes. I went up to my room, and for a long time sat in silent cogitation upon Lord Kestral's character, his conduct, and his intentions ; but as my reflections resulted in no satisfactory explanation of the circumstances that so perplexed me, I will pass them by,

and proceed with the narrative of events that followed.

I saw no more of my uncle until the following evening, when I returned from the studio, impatient to change my clothes and betake myself to Park Lane. He himself opened his parlour-door as I was passing through the passage.

‘Come in here, my dear,’ said he. ‘I have to introduce you to Lady Kestral, your aunt.’

Lady Kestral was seated near the window, with her back to the light; I could distinguish at the moment only her fine dark eyes and pale face. She looked at me attentively for some seconds, as if to see if I resembled my uncle, maybe, without moving from her seat; then she rose, and advancing to meet me, held out her hand frankly, saying, with a smile, that she was agreeably surprised to find that I was so unlike—she

paused for an instant, while her eyes half turned towards Lord Kestral, and continued—so unlike the nephew she had expected.

‘I am glad to see,’ said Lord Kestral, with a sneer, ‘that your long contact with *Quakers* has not dulled the edge of your wit.’

‘Oh, I assure you, my lord, I find these sober folks not half so dull as those who endeavour to be facetious,’ said Lady Kestral with perfect good-humour, as she took a seat on the sofa, and drew her skirts aside to make room for me.

I had pictured my aunt a tall, spare, fair woman, I know not why, and expected to see a face thin and careworn, with strong lines of character, and visible traces of the hardship and disappointments she had suffered; I found her unlike my idea in all respects. She was short, though the classic smallness of her head and the symmetry of her body gave her the appearance of height;

her complexion was dark and colourless ; she had large brown eyes which moved slowly with a kind of coquettish lingering ; her cheeks had almost a girlish fulness, and the only signs of character and of past suffering were in the lips and the faintly perceptible lines about them.

It was difficult, as I looked at her, to believe that she was really forty, for she looked eight or ten years younger. She wore a dress of some light material, and of the dove-colour that Quakers affect ; but it was admirably fitted to her pretty bust and shapely arms. A snowy frill around her throat and wrists was the only approach to ornament about her.

My uncle made no reply to his wife's sarcasm, for, like most people who are over-ready to be satirical, he was very quickly silenced by a sharp retort. He seated himself in his elbow-chair, and I could fancy,

by the vicious manner in which he leered at her, that he was ruminating on the bitter things he might have said, and would say, if she would only give him a second chance. He wore a nightcap, for his 'head' had been sent away to be dressed, and his face was in an early stage of preparation for the evening. It had been washed, and his yellow skin and many wrinkles added to the likeness which his narrow retreating forehead, his bleared small eyes, and his long hooked nose, presented to the head of some hideous carrion bird. He watched his wife without stirring a muscle as she exchanged with me a few conventional compliments, and at the first pause in our conversation said :

‘I am sorry, my dear, that you should see Lady Kestral at a disadvantage ; but the fact is, she is sadly out of temper at having to visit our friend, Mr. Adams, this evening.’

‘Yes, and I am still more annoyed now

that I know you, Mr. Falkland,' said she. 'Tis nothing short of an insult to your friend to attend his assembly in such a dress as this; and now I suffer in knowing that I must involve you in my discredit. Before,' she added, with a cavalier shrug of her shoulders, and looking full at Lord Kestral, 'I had only my own feelings to consider.'

Lord Kestral smiled, and nodded his head twice or thrice in acknowledgment of this compliment, whilst he wetted his lips once or twice, as if preparing them for a scathing reply.

'As I have no gloves to cover my red hands'—Lady Kestral extended her hands, which were very plump and well formed, and sufficiently white—'I may escape observation. It may be thought I am his lordship's nurse.'

'You will take that purse,' cried my lord,

with no pretence to amiability in either his voice or gesture, as he threw his purse on the table, 'and get whatever gloves and fallals are necessary before nine o'clock. We have ordered a hack to be here at ten,' he added, turning to me ; 'will that hour suit you ?'

'Sir,' said I, 'I promised Mr. Adams to be at his house by eight ;' and turning to Lady Kestral as I rose, I begged her to accept this engagement as an excuse for leaving her ; and so I made my escape from the room, well content to have found the means.

I had just finished dressing myself, and was looking at myself with some satisfaction, by the aid of a mirror some six inches square, when the little waiting-maid tapped at the door, and presented me with a letter, which she said a porter had that minute brought to the house.

In some astonishment I opened the letter, and with still greater astonishment read the hastily written lines within:

‘ For the love of God, come to me at once, and without letting my husband know of your intention. You will find me at the glover’s, by Marlborough Street. I implore you to burn this letter.

‘ Your unhappy Aunt,

‘ KESTRAL.’

I clapped on my hat, and having burned the letter, descended the stairs and got out of the house without being noticed. I heard my uncle cursing Pilcher as I passed the parlour.

I found my aunt at the glover’s, in the parlour behind the shop, seated before a table writing. The glover’s wife was bustling about, evidently on the alert to find out what was afoot.

‘How good of you to come so soon,’ said my aunt in a low voice, as she pressed my hand, looking into my face with her handsome eloquent eyes. ‘One moment.’ She glanced towards the glover’s wife expressively; and then, having finished her letter, dusted it with pouncet and folded it, she rose, thanked the glover and his wife very graciously for their civility, and taking my arm, left the shop with me. When we were in the street she said, as we walked towards the Oxford Road :

‘Has my husband told you my history?’

‘Yes.’

‘Has he told you that I am a designing, utterly worthless woman?’

‘Yes.’

‘Do you believe him?’

‘I never yet knew a woman who was utterly worthless.’

‘Then I may rely upon your sympathy?’

‘Undoubtedly.’

She was silent for a few paces; then:

‘Do you know why my husband, after seven years of absolute neglect, has brought me to London?’ she asked.

‘No.’

‘You do not know why he is taking me to Mr. Adams to-night?’ she asked, with some surprise.

‘No; I cannot guess.’

‘Would you like me to tell you?’

‘I have not the slightest wish to know any secret that concerns my uncle or his affairs.’

She thought for a time before again speaking.

‘Where does Mr. Adams live?’

‘In Park Lane. I am going there now.’

‘Park Lane. It would take me half an hour to get there. No, I cannot go.’ Again

she hesitated. 'I think I must explain my husband's motive, for I wish you to render me a service.'

'Cannot I serve you without the explanation ?'

'If you will.'

'Of course I will.'

'Thank you, George,' she said, with great tenderness ; 'I want you to give this letter to him. Give it into his own hands when he is alone. His own daughter must not see it ; and my husband must know nothing about it.'

I promised to be carefully secret ; and she, thanking me, took the letter from her pocket. She held it dubiously for a moment, as if considering whether she had neglected any precaution ; then she said :

'One last thought. Will you tell me, as nearly as you can, what kind of man Mr. Adams is ?'

I described his simple, honest, unselfish character ; his generous love for his daughter. And then I added some description of his appearance : his tall, ungainly figure ; his big nose and kindly eyes ; his peculiar eyebrows, that met ; and his sallow cheeks, slightly pitted with small - pox. Lady Kestral nodded occasionally as I ran through these particulars, and, with a sigh, put the letter in my hand, in silence, when I concluded.

A few paces brought us into the Oxford Road, and there we separated.

‘ I shall never forget your kindness,’ she said, as we parted, with a show of emotion so much in excess of the occasion, that somehow it reminded me of the fact that she had once been a popular actress.

Mr. Adams met me at his door. He was waiting to receive his visitors, as I found was his custom, to welcome them, to

relieve them of their cloaks and shawls, and to make himself contemptible in the eyes of his guests by other marks of uncultured hospitality. It seemed to me that everything he wore was as new as my own clothes, and our shoes creaked in concert as we moved.

‘You’re the first to arrive,’ cried he, grasping my hand; ‘and I don’t care how long the second is a-coming!’ he added, as we entered the drawing-room. ‘Delia will be down in a few minutes, and we shall have a sociable half-hour together before the grand folks have to be seen to.’

We were quite alone in the drawing-room; and so, as we seated ourselves, I pulled out Lady Kestral’s letter and handed it to him, telling him that I was instructed to give it in secret.

‘Lady Kestral! your aunt! letter for me!’ exclaimed he, looking first at the

letter, then at me, and again at the letter in blank surprise ; ‘ ’tis vastly kind of her, I’m sure. Well, let us see what she says.’

‘ The communication is for you alone,’ I said.

‘ Hi, hi, hi !’ he ejaculated, removing himself a few inches, and looking at me with a ludicrous air of importance.

He opened the letter, and at the first line his jaw dropped. An expression of consternation gathered upon his face as he read on ; and when he came to the end he crumpled the letter up in his hand, and sat looking before him in silent dismay. I rose from the seat beside him without attracting his notice, so absorbed was he in reflection, and went to the farther end of the room to examine a bronze that had caught my eye.

While I was examining the work of art, the creaking of shoes told me that Mr.

Adams approached ; and I turned about to meet him. He looked hard at me as he came up, and said, in a low tone :

‘ Do you know the contents of that letter, Mr. Falkland ?’

‘ Not one word of it.’

‘ Has your aunt told you anything concerning me or’—he hesitated—‘ or anyone connected with me ?’

‘ Nothing whatever. I am not curious to inquire into a matter which, I take it, can in no way concern me.’

‘ You are quite right in that—it does not concern you. Nevertheless, after what was said between us t’other night, I should like for there to be no sort of concealment or secret between us—nay, I should like to ask your counsel and advice in a piece of business that puts me about sadly, was it not that a motive even stronger than friendship compels me to hold my tongue. Here

comes my Delia—she must know nought of this plaguey mystery. Pray look as if we had not been talking of any such matter.’

And therewith he began to whistle a tuneless tune and look about him with such an artless simulation of indifference, that Miss Adams, coming up with pain in her face, said :

‘ Why, dear papa, what is the matter with you ?’

END OF VOL. I.



# HONEST DAVIE.

A Nobel.

BY

FRANK BARRETT,

AUTHOR OF

'LIEUTENANT BARNABAS,' 'A PRODIGAL'S PROGRESS,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# HONEST DAVIE.

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## CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH MR. ADAMS RECEIVES LORD AND  
LADY KESTRAL.

**W**HEN Mr. Adams protested that there was nought amiss with him, and that he never felt better in his life, Miss Adams believed him, for her spirits were just as volatile that evening as his were heavy; and then, turning to me, thanked me in a very graceful little speech for a bouquet I had bought in Covent Garden, and sent to her in the afternoon.

‘I put them in the green-house to keep fresh. Will you come with me to get them?’ she asked.

I accepted the proposal, and Mr. Adams, feigning to have some business with his butler, went with leaden paces out of the room by one door, while his daughter, with feet as light as her heart, tripped out by the other, her hand under my arm.

‘Do you know any of the new dances?’ she asked, as we entered the long dancing-room.

‘No, indeed,’ said I, smiling to think that I had never stepped a measure in my life.

‘You don’t think dancing very—very childish and silly, do you?’

This she asked with a sudden change from gaiety to gravity.

‘Suppose that I do ; what then ?’

‘I should be very sorry.’

‘Sorry for my want of taste?’ She

shook her head. 'Would it spoil your pleasure in dancing to think that I saw nothing in it to admire?'

'I would never dance another step,' she cried quickly, 'if I thought you despised it.'

'Why?'

'Why?' she echoed, turning upon me with a little look of indignation. 'Do you think I would do anything that I knew to be despicable?'

'How could you know that a thing was despicable which a hundred praised and only one condemned?'

'Because — if the one was papa, for instance,' she said, with a little confusion, 'I should be sure his opinion was just, and worth all the rest put together.'

'But your papa does not despise dancing.'

'Do you?' she asked, with a frown and a blush, impatient of an argument that was betraying her feelings.

‘Not at all. The only regret I shall have in seeing you dance will be that I am not your partner.’

‘Cannot you dance? You look as if you could.’

‘I don’t know the difference between a gavotte and a minuet.’

‘Shall I teach you?’ she asked, stopping short, and looking at me with bright expectancy.

‘I should like nothing better.’

‘Oh, famous! The musicians haven’t come yet, but we’ll find Miss Dobson, and make her play for us. Come along! No one will be here for nearly an hour yet. What fun! What kind of dance would you like to learn?’

‘Whichever you like to teach me.’

‘Pillow dances are countrified and stupid, rigadoons are old-fashioned, contra dances are nice; but I think a minuet—don’t you—’

She stopped suddenly. We were in the green-house, through which she had been hurrying me along to find Miss Dobson, who was in the tea-room. 'There is my bouquet,' said she, showing me the flowers I had sent her, which were set in moist moss.

They looked poor enough amidst the brighter and finer blooms with which the house was filled; but happily she did not see them with my eyes. She was no longer garrulous; she hung over the bouquet in silence, as if she had not already thanked me for it, and were trying to find some suitable words. She looked from it to me, from me to it, and then, whipping off her glove, gave me her hand, and smiled as I pressed my lips upon it.

Miss Dobson was easily prevailed upon to quit her post in the tea-room—which was arranged for the refreshment of seemingly

very hungry and thirsty guests, for the tables and sideboards were crowded with dishes of confectionery and decanters of wine—and returned with us to the dancing-room, where she seated herself before the pianoforte, and played while Miss Adams instructed me in the first steps of the minuet.

And sure there was never painted a prettier picture than that young and sprightly girl presented, as she lifted the hem of her skirts to show me how the steps were to be made. It is no wonder that I made but clumsy movements with my own feet as I looked at hers. She knew how charming and how beautiful she was, and every now and again she would glance side-long at the mirror on the wall for the pleasure of seeing herself. This pardonable pride gave her an air of exultation not inappropriate to the majestic movements of the minuet.

A queen might have stepped as nobly and as gracefully as she, but not more so.

There may be something in the music and movements of this dance that excites the imagination with lofty ideas. I admit that after I had been put through my paces, and could make the grand volt without mistake, I was prodigiously inflated with a sense of my own consequence as I led my partner into the middle of the room ; and spying myself in the glass, was particularly well pleased with the figure I cut, with my manner of raising my partner's hand, with the fall in my back, and my elegant gait, though doubtless I strutted like a game-cock, and was ridiculous enough to more impartial eyes.

About nine o'clock visitors were announced ; with that the dancing lesson came to an abrupt conclusion, and I became only a unit in the rapidly gathering throng of Miss Adams's admirers ; although she did

her utmost to distinguish me from them by signal marks of preference, and was clearly disappointed that I took such slight pains to profit by my advantage. I think she had looked forward to some little triumph through me, and expected me to astonish everyone by my wit and wisdom ; but my jealousy made me remarkable only for my dulness and want of amiability. I was disposed to acknowledge no single good quality in any one of her friends, and least of all in those who were most agreeable to her ; and my silence did not help to conceal my contempt for them. Indeed, I never felt more intolerant in my life ; and I verily believe that had the Admirable Crichton been amongst the number of her suitors, I could have found some damnable element in his character.

When Miss Adams found that I would make myself neither pleasant nor amusing, she very properly testified her resentment

by turning her shoulder upon me, and made no effort to retain me as I withdrew from the circle of young bloods about her.

The rooms were filling rapidly, and, as it seemed to me, with just such people as had been described by my uncle. I had not been in society for twelve or fourteen years, but I perceived clearly that either the habits of gentlefolks had altered considerably for the worse, or that Mr. Adams's visitors were not gentlefolks at all. They lacked the unstudied ease of people who are never careless, and that perfect self-command which is, I take it, the distinguishing characteristic of a gentleman. And just as a clumsy copyist seizes upon a too prominent feature, and exaggerates it in his portrait, neglecting altogether the fine lines that beautify the original and tone down its defects, so these people, to present a recognisable likeness, caricatured gentility by

overacting the least agreeable of its attributes. They were servile when they meant only to be civil, and were impudent when they would be thought easy. They bowed too low, they held their heads too high; they snuffed too often; they laughed too loud; either they sat like graven images, or they sprawled like Turks; they shifted their hands from one part of their person to another, unable to decide which position was most elegant, or they thrust them in their breeches-pockets, and kept them there; and while one walked about with his shoe-string hanging, because he conceived it beneath his dignity to tie it, another made no hesitation in slipping his wig up to scratch his head.

The ladies were not more remarkable for their elegant behaviour than for their youth and beauty. Some six or eight had been brought in by their husbands, their fathers,

or their sons; and, being quickly deserted by them, had congregated in a corner of the room, whence they could regard the group of which Miss Adams was the centre. They tittered and giggled a great deal, and when they had anything to say spoke behind their fans; when they were neither tittering nor talking they looked supremely contemptuous and unhappy.

‘What, Mr. Falkland, all alone, sir!’ said a voice near me.

I turned, and found Mr. Adams at my side. ‘Come, sir, I fear you are not enjoying yourself. Shall I introduce you to Captain Hasher or the Honourable Mr. Sparks?’

‘Thank you,’ said I, ‘Miss Adams has already introduced me to them.’

‘And you don’t care for ’em, hey, sir?’ he asked, in an undertone.

‘I see very little to admire in them.’

‘I am glad, for one reason, to hear you say

so. I was afraid I had taken an unjust prejudice against 'em. I am about to drink a glass of wine, sir; will you do me the honour to join me ?'

I accepted his proposal, and we walked towards the tea-room.

'I don't feel quite the thing to-night,' he said—'a little shaky and nervous; and I think a glass of wine will set me up. Do you know at what time we may look to see your aunt and uncle, sir ?'

'About this time,' said I, looking at my watch.

He wiped his forehead as he repeated my words. 'I don't feel at all right to-night,' he added with emphasis. 'Gene'lly I stay in the hall till all my friends have come—seems to me the civil thing to do, you know, sir; but to-night I couldn't stay there—got confused. Still, I should like to be at the door when your aunt and uncle arrive.'

‘I see no reason for treating them differently to your other guests.’

‘To be sure, that would be best; thank you, sir, for the hint; meet them just as if they were nobody in particular. Hark! there’s something drawing up at the door now.’

We were in the tea-room; a sound of wheels reached us; and as we listened, we heard the opening and shutting of a carriage door.

‘Them, I warrant,’ said he. ‘Mr. Falkland, would you mind coming into the hall with me—accidentally like? It will kind of explain anything different in my manner if it is your aunt and uncle.’

I acceded without hesitation, only wondering what the cause of his embarrassment could be—what possible connection existed between Lady Kestral and him. We passed from the tea-room into the hall

at the very moment Lord Kestral and his wife entered it by the door from the front.

‘How do you do, Squire—how do you do?’ cried Mr. Adams, taking his lordship by the hand; ‘and how do you do, ma’am?—glad to see you!’ He dropped my uncle’s hand, and offered his own to my aunt as he spoke.

She kept her hands by her side, and made a low courtesy, with no movement in her face except the slightest perceptible downward curving of the lips in contempt. Lord Kestral looked from Mr. Adams to his wife, from her to him, and back again, during this exchange of courtesies; and then he threw a quick glance of suspicion at me. He was perplexed and disappointed, as I know now.

‘Hope you’ll make yourself at home ma’am,’ continued Mr. Adams, dropping his hand, when he found it was not to be

shaken, with the unconcern of one who is not unused to being rebuffed in friendly approaches. 'Mr. Falkland told me that his uncle would do me the honour to bring you with him.'

'Mr. Falkland's uncle,' said Lady Kestral, with malicious emphasis, 'can doubtless tell you better than I why he has given himself such pains to bring us acquainted, Mr. Adams.'

With that she took my arm, and we passed through to the drawing-room, leaving his lordship to follow with Mr. Adams, to whom he had as yet not addressed a single word.

She pressed my arm, and murmured, 'Thank you !' and when we were well out of hearing :

'You know all now ?' she said.

'I know nothing,' said I.

'I thought, from your being with

him when we met, that he had told you.'

'He would have told me had he wished me to know.'

'And you are content to know nothing?'

'Quite.'

'That proves that you are not Lord Kestral's partisan.'

'I have no extraordinary liking for my uncle.'

'Then let us keep away as far as possible from the horrible old man. I hate him; and if you know anything of my history, even as he would tell it, you will see that I have good reason for my hatred. Let us get away from him in thought even. That is Miss Adams over there, in the midst of the crowd? Don't take me that way just now — presently. Mr. Adams is walking towards her with my husband.' (It was marvellous how much Lady Kestral took in

with one long sweeping glance.) ‘What gorgeous appointments! Is it the fashion now to furnish rooms in this mode?’

‘I know as little of the fashions as you. I believe Miss Adams consulted no taste but her own : she is an artist.’

‘An artist! I should not have thought it from the glimpse I caught of her face. Mr. Adams allows her to indulge her fancies?’

‘Entirely. He yields to her wishes in everything.’

Lady Kestral sighed. Her eyes slowly wandered over the groups of people before her.

‘What horrid women! Let us pass close by them; my dress seems to amuse the poor souls. I pity them; they are infinitely better than the men, of whom I know the look well enough; they infest the theatre. You know that I was for some years on the stage?’

‘ Lord Kestral told me so.’

‘ ’Tis a school where one learns character better than elsewhere. One meets men of all sorts there, and gets a knack of distinguishing at first sight the real gentleman from the false. I have not seen one man of good condition here ; they are adventurers, bubbles, cheats, like my husband, with even less than he has to support their pretensions ; men who live by appearances ; empty - headed, empty - handed, empty-hearted impostors, who will beg or borrow, or cheat or bully, or do anything that is mean rather than work. Has Miss Adams chosen her friends as she has furnished her house, by consulting only her own taste ?’

I replied with some hot and hasty words — I know not what.

‘ Don’t be angry with me,’ said she. ‘ I spoke spitefully, because my thoughts were dwelling on Miss Adams’s guests rather

than upon her. I have no feeling except of goodwill towards Mr. Adams and his daughter, and I wish you to like me ; that,' she added slyly, 'is a second reason for showing no disrespect to Miss Adams, I think. It does not annoy you to find that the company here displeases me ?'

'Not at all ; it displeases me equally, I assure you.'

'Does it not surprise you to find this kind of people here ?'

'Not at all ; we are all blinded by flattery, and Miss Adams has not—has not——'

'Has not my experience, you would say. That is true, happily for her ; though I doubt if, even with my experience, she would be proof against flattery. The wisest and the worst of men and women are never too old to be cheated by that. I was not thinking of Miss Adams, but of

her father, who should know what sort of people he admits into his house. They don't seem to flatter him greatly. Look at the group near the door, there ; I saw the men deliberately turn their backs upon him as he approached to introduce my husband, and now they have learnt his title you see what has happened !'

The group surrounded Lord Kestral, and Mr. Adams, edged out of the circle, stood waiting patiently for his lordship to be released from his admirers.

'Mr. Adams has lived in seclusion,' I explained, 'and he naturally believes these men to be what they pretend they are.'

'I am surprised he has not discovered the contrary, all the same ; for these people have not even the good sense of a pack of wolves, who, I believe, do combine together for mutual support—they are so envious one of another that, as if the truth were not bad

enough to tell, they invent lies to the discredit of their acquaintances, and try to make some sort of reputation for themselves by attempting to destroy the reputation of others. I fancy my husband will not be remiss in this respect when he has left the group and rejoined Mr. Adams; they have gone through that door together. I would wager my gloves he is slandering the men who just now held him by the hand. Here comes Miss Adams towards us. She dresses boldly, but she carries her dress well. Very graceful figure, and a charming manner. She looks particularly amiable; but that may be because she is a little jealous of your attentions to me. I have seen her eyes upon us. Introduce me.'

I introduced my aunt to Miss Adams. We were close by the group of women; they ceased tittering to catch the name, and I was vastly amused by the sudden change

in their expression as they heard my aunt's title pronounced, and turned to each other in astonishment.

Miss Adams was not content with a courtesy; she held out her hand to Lady Kestral, with a few warm words of welcome; to which my aunt, as if animated by a mutual feeling of affection, responded with equal ardour, as she held the young lady's hand and scanned her candid, lovely countenance.

When they had exchanged a few compliments, Miss Adams proposed that we should go into the adjoining room, where Signor Berboni—Mr. Adams called him Signor Barebone, which was a not unapplicable name for the meagre tenor—was about to sing. This proposal my aunt readily acceded to. The two ladies took my arms, and I was leading them off, when a diversion was caused by the servant at the

other end of the room throwing open the door and crying out, 'Dr. Blandly.'

My aunt stopped suddenly at the sound of that name, her hand twitching my arm as she glanced across me towards the door.

'An old friend of papa's!' Miss Adams explained, turning her face towards Lady Kestral. 'Will you permit me to introduce you?'

'Thank you, my dear,' said my aunt hurriedly, as she disengaged her hand from my arm; 'I find I have rather overrated my strength. If you will allow me to sit down for a few moments, I shall be grateful to you.'

She had shrunk back a little, so that I stood between her and the advancing guest. She bowed, turned, and with a rapid movement, yet not awkwardly, seated herself upon a vacant space beside the ladies, to

whom, as she threw out her fan, she seemed to be explaining her condition.

Miss Adams seemed to perceive that Lady Kestral had pleaded indisposition as a polite excuse to avoid an introduction which she had no mind to, and having returned her ladyship's bow, turned with me to meet the newly arrived visitor.

Dr. Blandly, I found, was a hale, stout, old gentleman, with no pretence to elegance, and a happy unconsciousness that his thick-soled shoes, grey worsted stockings, and chocolate-coloured coat rendered him a conspicuous subject for critical remark. He carried a stout stick in one hand and his hat in the other; and through his horn-rimmed spectacles he looked round him, at the room and the people in it, with a strongly marked expression of curiosity and interest in his face. As we came before him, and he caught sight of Miss Adams,

he laid his hat and stick on a chair, took her by both hands, and, holding her at a distance, cried :

‘ What, my little Delia ! grown a woman, I declare ! Ha’ got a sweetheart too, I warrant !’ (He glanced at me with his merry twinkling eye ; and, falling into a great loud laugh at Miss Adams’s confusion and blushes, he drew her to him, and gave her a sounding kiss on her cheek.) ‘ And who may this young gentleman be ?’ he asked ; and turning to me, he looked at me straight through his glasses, with a severe crease in his forehead, and his thick red lips pursed up firmly.

‘ Mr. Falkland, Dr. Blandly.’

‘ Mr. Falkland, hey ?’ said Dr. Blandly, keeping his eyes full upon me, allowing only his lips to relax ; ‘ well, let me tell you, sir, that you’ve got a good, honest, intelligent face, and I’m glad to shake you by the hand.’

We shook hands heartily ; it was impossible to do otherwise, having once given him your hand, for his was strong, and his arm was strong likewise, and he used both hand and arm in no half-hearted fashion ; and then, taking up his hat and stick, he asked Miss Adams where he could find her father.

‘ I will take you to him, sir,’ said she.

‘ Do, my dear. Come you o’ this side, and go you o’ that, young sir,’ said he, getting between me and Miss Adams ; ‘ so I shall be able to walk along without fear of knocking over any of these gimcracks or treading on the toes of a dandy. Well, you’ve got your rattle, hey, missy ?’ he said, pausing at the door to turn round and take another survey of the room and the people — ‘ got your rattle, hey ?’

‘ Does it seem to you very childish to like society ?’ I asked.

‘Not a whit more childish, I warrant, than it seems to little miss here for a man of my proportions to sit alongside a river angling the whole day long for fishes that no one would buy at twopence the score;’ and the Doctor, turning about, burst into another great laugh at his own weakness. ‘We are all children, my dear,’ he continued; ‘and the oldest of us doesn’t outgrow his weakness. We toil and struggle, we strive and fret for our toys, and are good or bad as we think our conduct may serve to get us what we want. Show me, sir,’ said he, when I ventured to object to his argument—‘show me where is the vast difference betwixt a child who falls asleep exhausted with passionate tears of disappointment in failing to get the toy that wisdom withholds, and the man who breaks his heart or loses his wits in striving for the fame

that Providence denies : his rejected poems, his useless models, his broken sword are swept away ; and all the grand pother of his life scarce draws a tear from those who live after him !

At that moment Signor Berboni began to sing, for we were at the end of the music-room ; whereupon the Doctor, declaring he was vastly fond of music, turned about, and insisted on waiting till the business was finished. It was a ‘fantasia,’ or some such thing ; and was composed to exhibit the singer’s skill in execution, and all melody was lost in a series of shakes, quavers, and roulades, which were curious but not pleasing to listen to ; and I saw that Miss Adams wished the tenor and Dr. Blandly miles asunder, for nothing could have been more opposite to the taste of such a man as this stout Englishman than such a performance, especially

as the Italian accompanied his singing with the most ludicrous grimaces and contortions it is possible to imagine. The Doctor looked and listened, at first with astonishment, then with evident discomfort; but towards the conclusion, something tickled his sense of humour, and, covering his mouth with his hands and turning about not to offend the company by indecent mirth, he fell to laughing in silence, but with such a violent shaking of the shoulders, distending of the veins upon his face and throat, and intense splutterings and rumblings, that I feared he would certainly do himself a mischief by controlling his emotions, and hastily led him into the greenhouse, where, after giving free vent to his hilarity, he recovered his equanimity, but without being able to assign any cause for his departure from it except 'the general effect of it all.'

From the greenhouse we entered the dining-room, which had been set out with card-tables, and where we found a good many players 'hard at it,' as the Doctor said.

Lord Kestral and another gentleman were seated at a table in the centre of the room, with a good many onlookers at the back of their chairs. They were playing *écarté*, and were very intent upon the game; so silent indeed were they, that I could hear the fall of the cards as he dealt.

Not far from him Mr. Adams was listening attentively to the exposition of two long-nosed gentlemen, whose hands were full of papers. They spoke in whispers, but I could see that Mr. Adams was being persuaded to subscribe to a scheme of which the benefit seemed doubtful to him. His thick black eyebrows were elevated, and he drew his long fingers down the side of his

long jawbone, holding his head on one side as he looked at the papers of figures.

‘Ha, ha!’ murmured Dr. Blandly, dropping his voice instinctively, as one does in entering any silent assembly, ‘there’s your dear simple old father being ensnared into another church-steeple!’ He advanced on tiptoe, and, coming just behind Mr. Adams, clapped him on the shoulder, and said, loud enough to be heard by me, ‘Don’t have anything to do with it, *Honest Davie!*’

‘Is your lordship not going to mark the king?’ some one asked of Lord Kestral.





## CHAPTER II.

### LADY KESTRAL'S NARRATIVE.

**E**ITHER Mr. Adams did not know of the peril in which he stood, or he overlooked it in the pleasure of meeting his old friend. There was not a symptom of alarm on his face as he turned about upon hearing himself addressed as 'Honest Davie.' I glanced at Miss Adams with the unjust suspicion that she was party to her father's secret ; she was as unconcerned as though she were accustomed to hearing him called by no other name. From her I looked to my uncle, almost

expecting to find him upon the point of denouncing the man who had appropriated Mr. Bond's fortune. With his set smile and customary complacency, he was mutely consulting his supporters as to the choice of the leading card. 'Was it possible,' I asked myself, 'that the game so engrossed his thoughts that external sounds had no significance for him?'

I left Miss Adams with her father and Dr. Blandly, and retraced my steps through the rooms, wondering how I had been so blind as not to see that Mr. Adams and Honest Davie were one and the same. My aunt and Mr. Adams himself had hinted at the solution of the riddle, and my uncle's conduct had pointed directly to the conclusion, yet had I never suspected the truth.

It seems yet more odd to me now, as I write the history of these events; but

here these events are crowded together, whereas their sequence was broken by incidents which destroyed their relative importance. And, again, I was so deeply impressed with a belief in the simplicity and honest worth of Mr. Adams, that it needed a proof not less convincing than that I received to make me believe that he was identical with the rascal my uncle described as Honest Davie.

My heart fell within me. I felt as though a beautiful statue had been struck down and shattered to pieces before my eyes ; and I scarcely dared to hope that it might be pieced together and restored to its original form. Doubtless my face expressed the gloom in my heart, for, as I re-entered the drawing-room, Lady Kestral came to my side, and, slipping her hand under my arm, asked, in a low tone :

‘ What has happened ? ’

‘What has happened!’ I repeated vaguely.

‘I have learnt who Mr. Adams is.’

‘And my husband, has he learnt also?’

‘I cannot say; apparently not.’

‘George, you must not tell him what you know.’ I was silent; she waited a minute and continued, ‘You do not know your uncle’s character. He is capable of committing violence; I believe he would kill me if he discovered all. You must not tell him.’

‘I must know the truth about Mr. Adams.’

‘You would never learn it from your uncle. I will tell you all, if it is necessary.’

‘It is necessary,’ I said sharply; ‘you are not the only one whose happiness is concerned.’

‘You are thinking of Delia. ’Tis for her welfare as much as for mine that you should guard the secret. I will answer

truthfully whatever questions you choose to put to me. Let us sit down here. We are secure from observation. When you see Dr. Blandly coming, cross the room to meet him; this screen and my fan will conceal me.'

'Why do you fear Dr. Blandly?'

'Because he knows me; he was present at my confinement.'

'I do not see what you have to fear on that account.'

'He might tell my husband. As you see, he is a man of strange temper!'

'What could he tell that your husband does not already know?'

'About Mr. Adams, don't you see?' (She spoke with a little confusion.) 'Besides, cannot you understand that I feel some shame in having run away from my husband? Dr. Blandly was the friend of Mr. Bond.'

The explanation did not seem to me satisfactory ; but 'twas a matter of small importance compared with the main question—Mr. Adams's honesty.

‘ Has Mr. Adams been guilty of dishonesty ?’ I asked.

‘ No !’ she replied.

‘ Your husband told me——’

‘ My husband would say anything, would believe nothing, as it suited his purpose,’ she said. ‘ You have heard his account : will you hear mine ?’ I assented ; and she proceeded, after a moment's reflection :

‘ I was nineteen when I married Mr. Bond. I had not a friend in the world—I was an outcast, standing alone on the brink of ruin. I had committed a sin in the eyes of my family and of the world : I had put my whole trust in the man I loved, and been forsaken by him. I was innocent of all intention to do wrong. I protest before

God that I had not an evil thought in my mind : the sin lay with him who took advantage of my innocence and faith, and with those whose narrow bigotry pushed me on towards destruction and closed the path to redemption. I was impelled by the prospect of infamy, and I married Mr. Bond with the belief that I could and should become a good and worthy woman.

‘I invented a story and deceived Mr. Bond. ’Twas an act to which I was forced by desperation. Think of it! I was scarcely older than Miss Adams. I was without money or friends, or any knowledge that would enable me to earn a living, and I had a horror of common infamy. I lied to Mr. Bond, and he believed me. He knew nothing of women, or he would have seen that some stronger motive than the prospect of getting a home existed to make a young high-spirited beautiful girl accept an old

man for her husband. He was not long deceived. In our honeymoon 'twas my misfortune to meet the man who had betrayed me. The sight of me revived his passion; he wished to renew the intimacy that had existed between us; and when I refused, he had the execrable meanness to revenge himself by anonymously revealing my past history to Mr. Bond. My husband ascertained the accuracy of the charge, and never spoke to me again. He took me to that miserable house at Southgate, apportioned me a set of rooms, and we lived apart. He never took me out; he never invited a friend to the house. Davie's wife was servant in his house. In my presence he said to her, "Whatever necessities Mrs. Bond requires you will get for her; but if she goes out of this house you will close the door and not permit her to re-enter."

‘All that I could do—all that I could say, I did and said, to make him forgive me. He was immovable. For months and months I strove patiently to obtain his pity and pardon by humbly bearing my burden. Had he relented in the slightest degree, had he given me the slightest hope of forgiveness, by word or deed, I should have been a happy and contented woman—I should have loved and worshipped him as my saviour. I built my last hope upon the birth of my child. I thought that his baby’s voice would plead for me and soften his heart towards me. As he refused to see me, so he refused to see my child. He would neither come to me, nor allow his child to be brought to him. He had the reputation of being a just man: he had made his position by his perfect honesty and upright dealing; it was perhaps an affair of principle to treat me as he would

have treated a defaulter: to punish me without mercy, and never again trust me or deal with me.

‘ When I found my last hope gone, I could no longer bear my sufferings. I felt that I should lose my reason if that awful condition continued. There was not a book nor a picture in the house. It rained every day. Davie’s wife was jealous of his sympathy for me, and seemed to delight in my misery. I should have put an end to my life if it had not been for Davie. From the first he had pitied me; he had tried to interest me in the garden, and brought me flowers and fruit, and birds’-nests, and anything that he thought would lighten my heart. I know, too, that he dared to remonstrate with my husband, but without avail, except that he permitted him to dig a little flower-bed before my window, which the poor fellow planted with flowers at his

own expense, as his wife gave me to understand with a pretty sharp tongue. Even in that horrible winter he found things to place in my way—pincushions made of pine-cones, a live squirrel in a cage, and such like things. But I was growing callous and perverse. I no longer tried to be cheerful, or to look at the best side of my position. His little gifts seemed to me a mockery: the squirrel died for want of care, and the pine-cone toys were flung out of window by Davie's wife with my permission. 'Twould be better, thought I, to die in a ditch, than to live any longer in that house. At length, one day I went to Davie, who was in the garden, and asked him if he could lend me a few shillings.

“ ‘Is it come to that, mum?’ he asked, as if he had foreseen my resolution.

‘I nodded, and without a word he set down his shovel and went indoors.

‘I heard his wife crying out at the top of her voice that he should not have the “box-iron,” and that she would tell Mr. Bond if he dared to give a halfpenny of her savings to “that hussy;” but Davie made no response, and in a few minutes he came to me and put three guineas and some shillings and pence into my hand; and, with the tears streaming down his face, said: “Lord love you, ma’am,” and then turned to his shovel and began digging furiously.

‘I left Mr. Bond’s house that morning, with my baby, took the coach to the Flower Pot in Bishopsgate Street, and lived for a month in Blackfriars, fearing every day I should be found and taken back to Southgate by my inexorable husband.

‘Then I was lucky enough to obtain an engagement at the theatre. My character was no longer plastic; it had set. I seemed to have brought away something of my

husband's hardness from that house at Southgate. I found a new life opened to me, and I entered it with no thought of returning to the old.

‘There was no more tenderness in my heart, no hope or wish of reconciliation with my husband. I was alone and independent, and I found that my new temper accommodated itself well with my new circumstances. I had been lively and full of fun as a child—to the apprehensive dread of my lugubrious relatives, who foreboded that such lightness of heart would end in my downfall.

‘I never laughed in the morning but they prognosticated I should weep in the evening, and took good pains to bring about the fulfilment of their prophecy.

‘And now my spirits returned, but with a cynical bent, and a tendency to make light of serious things and ridicule the virtues. The parts I played with greatest

success were Mrs. Pinchwife in "The Country Wife," and Miss Prue in "Love for Love." But understand me that though I made light of unchastity upon the stage, and lived amongst people who made a constant mock of virtue, I was so careful of my own honour that even scandal could find nothing in my life to feed upon. To tell you the truth, every warm and yielding sentiment seemed extinguished in my breast, and I was far too wise to yield to the temptation of money. I received many presents, but I saw that I should get no more if I allowed my admirers to rise from their knees, so I kept them there. I never once saw my husband—the theatre was the last place in the world that he would go to, and I had, of course, taken another name. For ten years I lived in this way—a careless life, a hopeless one, spending my money as I got it—accepting any excitement that was offered,

so long as I could preserve my precious reputation, and thinking of the past and of the future as little as possible. Your uncle was one of my most constant admirers. As you may suppose, he gave me but little; but he was useful to me. I have known women who carried mysterious little stilettos in their pockets for the safeguard of their virtue, and others who constantly had a woman to attend them; but Lord Kestral served that purpose much better. In a moment of danger, women have not the presence of mind, or the courage, perhaps, to use a dagger, and servants are always to be bribed, and never fail to revenge themselves upon their mistresses for dismissal by spreading reports to their discredit. Lord Kestral was as jealous of my honour as the youngest of lovers, and had no motive but to proclaim my superior prudence and virtue.

‘I told him part of my history—as much

as I wished him to know; and he it was who discovered that my husband, Mr. Bond, was at the point of death. By his advice, and in my own interests, I went to Southgate to implore my husband's forgiveness. I shall not forget that journey in the coach. There were three men distantly related to Mr. Bond, and all going to pay him a visit of condolence. They talked of nothing but his immense fortune, and speculated upon how he would dispose of it. They knew nothing of him personally, but while we were waiting to start, the guard was good enough to tell what he knew, and in particular told me—"females being interested in such affairs" he explained—as much of my own history as he knew. 'Twas little enough, for Davie's wife was almost as close as her husband concerning Mr. Bond's affairs, and most of what he had to tell was absurdly wide of the truth.

‘The three gentlemen, with one accord, turned into the Fox Inn at Southgate, probably to arrange some scheme of action, for ’twould have been palpably unwise to present themselves in a body before the sick man; and as the last one entered the inn, I passed down the lane leading to Mr. Bond’s house, saying to myself, “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; but time and chance happeneth to all.”

‘Davie opened the door; I had my veil down, and he did not know me. He held the door with one hand and the jamb with the other, and so, barring the entrance, told me that Mr. Bond would see no one, and asked what I wanted. I lifted my veil. “Good God, ma’am!” says he, “master was right, after all. You are not dead. He said you would come with the rest, and here,” he adds, “here, sure enough, you are.” Of

course he let me enter, and we went into the dismal parlour, and I could have laughed at my own folly, thinking how I had wept and fretted and eaten my heart away there in the vain struggles of my earlier life. I acted a little, of course—it was necessary ; and though Davie seemed to detect a change in me, he still showed a warm interest in my welfare. “When my master said you was still alive, I spoke my mind,” says he ; “and I made bold to tell him ’twas his duty to provide for you, and that he’d done a great wrong in treating you harshly. For I see you, ma’am, a-trying all you knew to do right and atone for the past, a young creeter with a power of good in you ; and I know you’d have grown up straight and healthy, if only master had used you as a living thing.”

‘He advised me not to see my husband. Davie was not a fool : I think he saw

through my acting, and believed my husband would see through it also. "Master's getting wonderful reasonable," says he, "now he feels how weak and helpless he is. I'll tell him you've been, and I'll try all I can to make him do what is right for you and the child ; and I doubt not he will be fair-dealing in death as he has been in life. He's too respectable to die unlike a Christian, and he'll go off, mind me, forgiving his enemies, with the doctor o' one side of him and the parson o' t'other."

' I gave him my address, and he promised to write to me ; and a few days after I had a letter from him, saying that my husband had promised nothing, except that he would do his best for me and his child. Ten days later, as I was dressing in my room at the theatre, the call-boy came to tell me that a person named Davie wished to see me.

' Oh, what a bustle there was for five

minutes getting that miserable little room tidy !— thrusting rouge-pots and candle-ends and pomades into drawers, and sweeping my stockings and petticoats, wigs and garters, under the washstand ; for I had fallen into slovenly, untidy habits, and was a very slattern in private. It was not all neat when he knocked at the door ; the sleeve of a shift was hanging out of the coal-scuttle, and three parts of my hoop were sticking out from under the dressing-table.

‘ He came in ; and my woman left the room with a hundred odds and ends hid up in her apron. I might have spared myself all that bustle and trouble ; for Davie divided his attention between me and his hat, and never once turned his eyes to the right or to the left. I never saw a man with a face so long and lugubrious as his.

“ “ Master’s gone, ma’am,” says he ; “ he departed this morning at a quarter to nine, in the sixty-fifth year of his age.”

‘ I hid my face in my hands, saying to myself that surely Davie had been consulting with the undertaker to have these facts so pat.

“ “ Oh, Davie !” I exclaimed, after a moment or two of silence, “ did he not ask to see me at the last ?”

“ “ No, ma’am,” says he ; “ he wouldn’t let me send for you ; and you may depend upon it, all the provision he has made for you and his child is due to his sense of right and justice, and not to any feeling of affection.”

“ “ Provision for me !” I cried incredulously.

“ “ Yes, ma’am,” he replies ; “ master said all along he would do the best he could, and he did it ; and though I couldn’t at

first see how that might be, yet I see it plain enough now."

"You have read his will?" I asked.

"Yes, ma'am," says he; "master put it in my hand at the last moment, and said I might read it when I liked—and there it is, ma'am," and with that he hands me a folded piece of parchment.

"I opened it quickly, and read it. 'Twas not a long document. Mr. Bond, after carefully enumerating my faults, and adding thereto his reasons for disposing of his property so that I could have no legal claim to it, bequeathed his house and everything it contained to his servant, Davie Adams. I could not understand it. I turned the parchment about to see if there was any postscript; then I looked at Davie, to see if he was making a mock of my humiliation. He was turning his hat round slowly in his hand from one corner to the other, and

looking into the crown with his eyebrows raised and his cheeks drawn down.

“ “ Is this the provision for me and his child that a sense of justice and rectitude impelled Mr. Bond to make ? ” I asked rather warmly.

“ “ Yes, ma’am,” says Davie. “ He knew that the best thing he could do for his child would be to give it a father and you a husband, one who would love and care for you both to the very utmost in his power ; and he knew that I pitied you and understood you, and sided with you in your misfortunes, and was always worriting and worriting him to get you out of the way of temptation. He knew all that, and he gave me all he had because he knew me and trusted me more than any other man, and believed I could make myself something better than a gardener and a rough awkward fellow, such as I feel myself to be at the

best o' times, and that you might have an inducement to accept me as your husband—seeing my wife's been dead these two years—if so be I could make so bold as to ask you ; and he put those branding words in his will to strengthen the inducement.”

“ How ? ” I asked, fairly bewildered.

“ That open statement of your past fault was given to me, I am mortal sure, to destroy if you were willing to live a good and sober life, and to make public were you not. He knew that my feeling towards you would never permit me to publish your shame to all the world unless you were so callous and far gone as to be indifferent to everything that is good. In short, not a farthing was to go to you unless you accepted the only means he saw of your being brought into better ways. These be mighty unbecoming words for me to use to you, ma'am,” he adds apologetically,

“but I have no choice, your welfare being to be considered.”

‘It took me some minutes to see the matter clearly; then I said :

“And if I promise to become your wife you will not produce that will, Davie?”

“No, ma’am,” says he, “’tis for you to decide by a word whether I shall destroy it, or whether it shall be read after the funeral.”

‘I reflected again: “If there is no will produced,” said I, “the property will become my son’s.”

“I suppose it will,” said he, “Master Attorney would settle all that. ’Tis no great matter whether he has it or we keep it for him. You loathe the town and its excitements,”—I had told him so—“and so do I. We can live in the country, and whether we have a hundred a year or ten thousand won’t matter twopence to us.”

‘It mattered a great deal to me. I knew sufficient of Davie’s character to be assured that what was set down by the attorney he would carry out to the letter; and if he had no right to touch Mr. Bond’s money, he would not draw one farthing from it, persuade him how I might. To accept his proposal was to doom myself to seclusion, limited means, and a certain kind of tyranny which the most amiable persons can exercise if they have principle and the strength to act up to it. Davie was kind, but he was strong, and he was not a fool. These reflections naturally gave me an air of chagrin, which Davie perceived as he glanced upwards from his hat.

“We’re not of the same sort, ma’am, you and me. I know that,” says he. “The boys make fun of me, and laugh at my long legs; and as for my mind, ma’am, there’s nothing in it but what’s come there kind of

natural like, a-digging of potatoes and planting out little herbs, and finding out how they grow, and what they're given us for, and the like. I know no book stuff of philos'phies and 'stronomies, and card-playin', and the like. A child can read and write, and cipher up quicker than what I do. I dursen't ask you to take me for myself ; 'tis a presumption, ma'am, which I do think I should never have forced myself to, but for your letter, in which you spoke of your dreams and Providence"—he referred to the answer to his letter, in which I had been rather poetical than literal—"and for my true concern in your welfare. Think of——"' Lady Kestral paused a moment ; " think of your own interest, and accept me as your protector and most faithful servant, and be sure that I shall never forget my duty. 'Tis all the claim I have to your affection—this constant and faithful love and tenderness I

feel for you ; but 'tis the assurance of your welfare, and if trying hard to be a gentleman will raise me above my present condition, be sure, ma'am, I shall in time be not unworthy of you."

'The poor fellow was deeply moved, and in the midst of his prayer he fell upon his knees at my feet. I have only recalled one-half of what he said, for my mind was all of a flutter, lest anyone in passing along the passage should push open the door, which my stupid woman had left ajar, and so furnish the green-room with a pretty piece of scandal. And, indeed, these fears were partly realized, for while Davie was yet speaking, the door opens, and my Lord Kestral appears. Happily, his lordship's eyes were not of the best, and Davie's back was to the door, so he saw not enough of Davie to remember him. He closed the door with a sarcastic speech, and I found

myself under the necessity of bringing my interview with Davie to an immediate conclusion, for the call-boy now knocked at the door and cried out that the act had commenced. What was I to do ? To say “ Yes ’ was to give up every pleasure of life—as life was to me then ; to say “ No ” was to lead to the discovery of my past faults and close the path to advancement. For I had already speculated on the death of my husband, and foreseen that I might assure myself from want in my old age, by an advantageous match, if I maintained my character for virtue. I said “ Yes,” and Davie vowed that the will should be destroyed. I wished him to put it in the fire at once, but he declined, after a few minutes’ reflection, giving me some very sound reasons for his refusal.

‘ I promised to see him again after the funeral of my husband—not to be outdone

in prudence—and we parted. As you may suppose, I was not particularly charmed with the prospect. I was no longer a sentimental girl. I had shed my last tear, and the source was closed up; my heart had been cruelly torn, but it was healed and grown hard; I thought only of myself. What advantage would accrue to me, I asked myself, by my son being heir to my late husband's fortune?

‘Davie, I felt sure, would neither touch the money himself, nor let me touch it; and my son's character was already sufficiently pronounced to convince me that when he came to his estate he would take good care to keep it for his own pleasures. I had said “Yes” to Davie to save myself from disgrace, and because I saw no reason for keeping my promise if I thought better to break it. In the middle of the act a thought occurred to me that fairly took

away my breath. If Davie, relying upon my promise, failed to produce the will, the property would go at once to my son as the heir-at-law, and I, as his natural ward, should hold possession of his estate so long as I remained unmarried.

‘Davie, of course, could force me to be his wife by threatening to produce the will, but that would be only after the lapse of a period which was, in his consideration, of reasonable length. But in that interval I might marry a man of position to my taste, and afterwards, by an appeal to Davie’s generosity, induce him to forgive me.

‘Knowing his disposition, I believed that he would never betray the truth from motives of revenge or cupidity; and his feelings towards me and my child would prevent him from disclosing a fact which would ruin my child and deprave me.

‘These thoughts were yet revolving in my brain, when the act ended, and Lord Kestral came to offer explanation and apology for intruding upon the privacy of my dressing-room. Here was the very man for my purpose. Titled and well connected, he could give me a place in society which Davie, if he spent all his money, could never procure for me. Poor and amorous, and not overburdened with conscientious scruples, he would readily enough marry me to get the handling of my son’s fortune. I told him, with some adroitness, I believe, something of what had happened; only, I took care to conceal the fact that a will existed, and that I had seen it. His lordship fell rapidly into the trap. Himself dishonest, at least in intention, he concluded at once that Davie was a thief with no better motive than his own in offering marriage to me. It amused me to watch

how he sought for the explanation I wished him to find, as we walked up and down the green-room, smoothing my hand tenderly as it lay on his arm. At length he stops short of a sudden, and cries out :

“ “ Depend upon it, my dear, this Honest Davie is a liar. Either there is a will in your favour that he knows of, or there is no will at all, and your son is heir.”

“ “ La ! my lord,” said I ; “ think you any man could be so base ?”

“ “ I’ll answer for the baseness of a servant who has the reputation for honesty,” says he. “ ’Tis so, I’ll stake my name ! Did not the rogue seem mighty anxious ?”

“ “ To be sure,” said I ; “ my husband died only this morning, and he wouldn’t leave me until I had given him an answer.”

“ “ And what answer gave you ?” he asks.

“ “ Why, my lord,” said I, with a sigh, and

dropping my eyes, I said ' Yes ' for my son's sake."

" " My dear," says he, " you was too hasty. But a promise of that sort is not binding, thank God. At any rate, you can wait. I'll send my attorney to attend the funeral and hear the reading of the will, if there be one ; and, if it is not proved that this Honest Davie is an arrant liar, you shall marry him, and I'll give you away ; but if it be—begad, you shall marry me as a reward for the service I have done you."

' At the meeting after the funeral, Mr. Bond's man of law stated that he had drawn up some days previously a will in favour of Davie, and left it in Mr. Bond's hands, but that the most complete search had failed to discover any trace of the document. Davie sat in sullen silence, and could only be brought to answer "Yes" and "No" to questions, and it was concluded that his silence was

the result of disappointment. Lord Kestral was triumphant ; his lawyer held possession of the Southgate house and its contents, Davie was dismissed, and it was only necessary to make me his wife to be master of an immense fortune. Over-anxious that this chance should not slip through his fingers, he did not rest until he had married me ; and though I pretended reluctance to break my word with Davie and marry another so precipitately, I was, as you may suppose, no less anxious to get the marriage over and escape from London, lest Davie should discover my intention, and frustrate my plans by producing the will, which I could scarcely hope he had destroyed.

‘ We were married privately at Doctors’ Commons, and left England at once, after instructing the lawyer to examine my late husband’s papers, to make an inventory of all the bonds, bills, and policies, and send it

to me in Paris, and on no account to give my address to Davie, or to acquaint him with Lord Kestral's connection with me. I bade him not even mention his lordship's name, for fear of discovery.

‘ We had been in Paris but a few weeks when I received a letter from the lawyer informing me that the whole of Mr. Bond's estate amounted in value to no more than a couple of thousand pounds. You may imagine my consternation and his lordship's fury. He declared that Davie had robbed him, and that I was party to the theft, and no argument of mine would assure him to the contrary. He vowed he would hunt down the thief and make him restore the money, and this threat filled me with new terror, for the finding of Davie would only deprive us of the little we possessed of Mr. Bond's fortune. Yet I dared not tell my husband. Happily, it was impossible to find Davie without

money to pay for a legal inquiry, and his lordship had not a farthing.

‘ We had left Paris, where we had been living in the finest style, without paying our hotel expenses, and at the fear of being overtaken by the police, for the sum his lordship had borrowed upon the credit of my son’s inheritance was gone, and the lender refused to advance another penny, seeing how matters stood. Nor could my husband’s personal inquiries lead to any discovery of Davie. He had lived in seclusion with his master, and, though he was well-known in the neighbourhood, no one knew anything of his affairs, for Davie, though simple and outspoken as a child in matters that concerned himself alone, was immovably reticent upon those affairs which concerned others. He had inquired for me at the theatre, and at my old lodgings, and of the lawyer who had the management of my

son's estate, and failing to find any trace of me, seems to have hit upon the truth, and given me up as hopelessly lost ; for from the day that my husband took me back to my old home at Southgate, until this morning when he came to fetch me from it, I never once heard the name of Honest Davie.'





### CHAPTER III.

OF FALKLAND'S INCONSISTENT BEHAVIOUR,  
AND HOW HE CAME TO MAKE LOVE TO  
DELIA.

**T**HIS was my aunt's story. I have written it, not as she told it, but with such modifications as circumstances made necessary. The course of the narrative was broken by frequent interruptions—I left her side for a few minutes while Dr. Blandly, with Mr. Adams and his daughter, passed through the room—by digressions that led nowhere, except to show that in all her wrong-doing Lady

Kestral was more to be pitied than blamed—by arguments in justification or extenuation of her conduct, and above all by several contradictions which provoked question, and had to be set right and explained.

It struck me, as I listened to that part of the story relating to the events that immediately followed her first marriage, that my aunt was not telling me the whole truth. 'Twas here that contradictions occurred, though in this very part she was most careful in choosing her words. She had an explanation at the tip of her tongue for everything; but these explanations did not dispel my doubts—nay, rather, they engendered a suspicion that she was conceding a fact which materially affected the power that Lord Kestral might possibly have over Mr. Adams.

‘Why did Mr. Bond refuse to see his child?’ I asked.

‘Because of his violent antipathy to me.’

‘Do you know why he did not make more vigorous efforts to find you and your son when you left him?’

‘For the same reason, I should say. I conceive he was heartily glad to be rid of us both.’

‘Antipathy does not justify a man in neglecting his duty. *You* may have lost your claim to his protection, but he was bound to care for the welfare of his son; and I cannot understand how Mr. Bond, if he really possessed the principles you ascribe to him, could have allowed his sense of justice to be overcome by a mere feeling of prejudice. It would not have been difficult to find you, and the law gave him a right to the custody of his son.’

‘I do not know what efforts he made to find me,’ said Lady Kestral; and then, as if she saw the tendency of my thoughts, and

wished to avoid further interrogation on the subject, she added, 'What I have told you is the truth—every word of it ; and I fail to see how your inquiries can throw any light on the question of Mr. Adams's honesty.'

This was true. My aunt had told me more than I had any right to demand ; and even had I found courage to ask, she might very properly have declined to answer the question in my mind—namely, whether her child was the son of Mr. Bond, or of the faithless lover whom she had known before her marriage and met in her honeymoon ? This, as she hinted, had nothing whatever to do with the honesty of my friend, so I held my peace ; and, indeed, I soon lost sight of my suspicion in the interest aroused by the description of Davie's noble generosity and fidelity. 'Twas like having balm laid upon an aching wound to doubt his honesty no more—to know that he was

guiltless of the crime imputed to him by my uncle and too readily believed by me. A feeling of profound relief filled my heart with gratitude, and redoubled the affection I had for him.

I can see now that friendship for him was not the only feeling at work in my breast. My first thought, when I heard his name pronounced, was—'tis all over with my love and the tender hopes that have sprung up about it ; but I did not recognise at that time how much my love for Miss Adams had to do with my concern for her father.

The tears sprang in my eyes as I caught sight of them coming towards us. Never had Mr. Adams's gaunt visage looked so honest to my eyes, never had his daughter's beauty seemed to me so sweet and lovable. I rose from my seat and went to meet them—'twas an impulse I had no power to restrain. I felt I had done my friend an

injustice, and I longed to offer some atonement, if only by a cordial shake of the hand, such as friends give to a tried man when he leaves the bar acquitted.

My aunt had risen also, and taking my arm, she said in a low tone hurriedly :

‘ You will do nothing to make me regret the confidence I have placed in you. Not a word of what has passed between us must be repeated.’

This timely caution, if it did not lessen the ardour of my emotion, put a check upon its outward manifestation ; nevertheless, I fancy that my feelings were sufficiently evident to Mr. Adams, for his eyes, as they met mine, expressed something of the pleasure I felt.

I took Miss Adams away, leaving Lady Kestral with Mr. Adams, and for the rest of the evening I scarcely left her side for two minutes together. I was heartily ashamed

of the ill-humour I had shown at the beginning of the evening. Now that a fresh tide of love had washed away the jealousy from my heart, I perceived that my conduct had been ungenerous, impolite, and unmanly, and I did my best to make amends for the slight I had offered Miss Adams. I was civil to Captain Hasher and Mr. Sparks, and I believe that I distinguished myself in a verbal encounter with three or four wits who assailed me. I had the temerity to lead Miss Adams out in a minuet before a crowd of jealous rivals, and acquitted myself, thanks to her admirable tact and unseen guidance, without any palpable blunder, and greatly to my own satisfaction and hers also—in a word, I behaved myself like a lively and good-humoured gentleman, and astonished myself by my own address.

Miss Adams seemed perplexed at first by this unlooked-for change in my temper, and

though she readily fell in with my humour, 'twas clear she had not forgotten my coolness to her friends, nor ceased to speculate upon the cause. Many of the visitors were gone—a few men lingered over the card-tables—and the ladies attending them clustered round Lady Kestral, who, now that her title was known, was as much respected as before she had been despised. Miss Adams and I were alone in the music-room, where she sat running the fingers of one hand lightly over the keys of the pianoforte. She was silent and reflective. I was content to sit there and look at her sweet face. With her eyes still upon the keys, she presently asked, in a thoughtful tone :

‘ Do you like society ?’

‘ Yours,’ said I.

She smiled faintly, and bowed, but without lifting her eyes or changing her thoughtful mood.

‘I will put my question in another form,’ said she. ‘Do you like my friends?’

‘Why do you ask?’

‘Because I am in doubt. When you met them first, I thought you disliked them, and considered them unworthy of your acquaintance.’

‘Perhaps I considered them unworthy of your acquaintance.’

‘If that was so, you did right to hold them in contempt, and you have done wrong in altering your manner since.’

‘I see now that I was exceedingly ill-mannered and unjust. Common politeness required that I should treat your friends with respect.’

‘Not if you thought they did not deserve it. I do not think—nay, I am sure,’ she said, raising her head and looking me full in the face with her beautiful frank eyes—

‘sure that you would not tell a falsehood, nor act one, in any case.’

‘God forsake me, if ever I tell you a falsehood,’ I said, trembling in every nerve.

Her fingers ceased to touch the keys, and her hand fell in her lap ; she looked at me earnestly for a moment, and then a smile broke over her face, and she dropped her eyes.

‘I know now,’ continued I, gathering my wits together, ‘that I was hasty and prejudiced. Your friends may be good and worthy gentlemen. Had they been better, I do believe I should have disliked them more.’

‘Why?’ she asked, lifting her eyes again, and looking at me in wondering astonishment.

‘I know not,’ said I, ‘unless it be because’  
—I leant towards her, my temples throbbing,

my voice choked with the beating of my heart—‘because I love you.’

‘You love me!’ she said, in a tone of sweetest melody. ‘You love me!’ she repeated, her pretty eyes twinkling, and her whole face wreathed in a sweet smile. And then she said again, as if she could not too often repeat the words, ‘You love me!’

‘With all my soul, dear,’ I said, and I caught up her little white hands and pressed them to my burning eyes, for they ached with looking on her brightness; and as I let them go and clasped her supple body, they slid around my neck, and she murmured ‘Sweetheart!’

It was all so unexpected on her part, so unpremeditated on mine, that we had taken no heed of the risk of discovery; and had a cannon-ball burst through the walls, we could not have been more overwhelmed with alarm and confusion, than we were on hear-

ing a voice at the other end of the room. Happily a screen protected us from immediate observation, and by the time the intruders had passed it, Delia had sufficiently regained her self-possession to be able to strum out a tune, while I diligently turned over the pages of a music-book which was upside down. They were two old gentlemen who passed through the room—the two I had seen hours before explaining their papers to Mr. Adams; and they were now so busily engaged in wrangling over these same documents that they took no notice of us.

'Twas well, for I am the worst actor in the world, and Delia's cheeks and neck were sufficient to convict her. For the first time she was blushing: 'twas in maidenly shame at being observed, not of being beloved. Her face had glowed with pleasure as I told her that I loved her; but

she was proud to know I loved her, not ashamed.

‘Will you ever pardon me for wooing you in such a fashion?’ I whispered.

‘You have wooed me as I would be wooed—as your heart prompted you.’

‘I did not even fall upon my knees.’

‘Why should you? I had nothing to forgive, and you had nought to ask that I had not already given you.’

‘Did you know that I loved you?’

‘I hoped so,’ she faltered, dropping her hands from the keys, for we were again alone.

She was silent a moment, then suddenly she turned her face to me and murmured :

‘If you fall upon your knees, let me kneel by your side to thank God that you and I love one another.’

She gave me her hand, and leaning towards me with half-closed eyes, said :

‘Kiss me, and say good-night, sweet-heart.’

‘So soon, dear love?’ I said, when my lips parted from hers.

‘Yes; good-night. I am a little fool. I must cry. I am too happy!’ she whispered.

Laughing and sobbing by turns, and with a little nod, she turned away and left me.





## CHAPTER IV.

MR. ADAMS ADVOCATES AN EARLY MARRIAGE :  
FALKLAND OBJECTS.

**I** WANTED to be quite alone, now that Delia was gone, to think of her—and her only—without fear of interruption, as, waking from a pleasant dream, one closes one's eyes and continues it in imagination. I passed unobserved through the drawing-room, got my hat, and went out into the Park. I was never less inclined to sleep, and 'twas a delight to be near the house in which my Delia lay ; so I walked up and down, never losing sight of the lights in

the upper windows of that house, and indulged myself in tender reveries for nigh upon an hour ; then, concluding that the visitors were departed, I determined to go and tell Mr. Adams at once of what had happened. The servants were taking up the carpet that covered the steps ; they told me I should find Mr. Adams in the drawing-room. I found him alone, seated in a low chair, with his arms crossed upon his breast and his chin resting in his hand, absorbed in reflection.

‘ Ha ! Mr. Falkland,’ he cried, spying me as I drew near ; ‘ I thought, to be sure, you was gone, and I was wondering why you hadn’t bid me good-night.’

‘ I wish to talk with you,’ said I, ‘ if you are not too tired.’

Was I never so tired ’twould give me pleasure to listen to you, sir. Sure, it must be an important affair that keeps you hereso late.’

‘It is a serious matter,’ I said.

‘Serious!’ said he, with a smile, after fixing his eyes intently upon me; ‘then to be sure your looks belie you, for your eyes are as bright as the light, and you look as blithe as a robin!’

‘As well I may, for my heart is full of happiness. But ’tis a serious business, none the less, and he must want sense, and heart as well, who thinks but lightly of an act which lays the lifelong welfare of a woman at his disposal.’

‘Why, that is true indeed, sir; but—hey? what? Pr’ythee, put me out of suspense!’

‘Your daughter and I have bestowed our hearts on one another.’

‘God be praised!’ cried he, seizing my hand and wringing it again and again—‘God be praised! My anxieties are at an end, and I care not what may come. To have her married to an honest man was

all I wished for, and my prayer is answered. And you, sir, I could have wished you no better fortune ; for Delia has not her equal—she is the best maid in the world, as she is the sweetest.’

‘ I am sure of it,’ said I, with no less enthusiasm than he showed.

‘ Aye, aye ; but you know not half of her virtues ; you know less than I know, and I know not all. She is richer in good, sir, than this earth is in gold ; and ’twill grow, sir, by the using—just as her beauty will grow with time. Lovely she is now to look at—lovelier than a May morning—but ’tis nothing to the charms yet unfolded. Think of her, sir, with all her noble yearnings fulfilled—her mind fixed upon one constant object, her whole soul bent in one high direction ! Think of her, Mr. Falkland—a young mother, with her first-born at her breast, and her beautiful eyes full as a lake

of contentment and joy and pride ! Think of her with your children growing up around her, yielding to her patient training, and growing up in her image under her loving care ! Aye, think of her even when her hair has grown white and her limbs have lost their youthful vigour, still turning to you with unchanged love in her eyes, guarding your happiness with unfailing care, surrounding your life with a holy calm like the glow of an autumn sunset !—think of these things, sir, and tell me if you have not gained an inexhaustible treasure in her love ?’

I was so greatly moved by his unconscious eloquence that I could not answer ; but he took no notice of my silence, for he had sunk into a reverie. Presently he said, in a less excited tone :

‘ And she is not less fortunate. A woman, as it seems to me, is born to make a man

happy, and therein lies her happiness. Is there one more miserable than she who fails to fulfil her part, or one more happy than she who succeeds in it? Here is an end to her caprices and inconstant leanings. They are but the striving of a vigorous mind to find some one most worthy thing to do. I have seen young birds, sir, flying hither and thither purposelessly with straws before they found their mates, and vines that throw their tendrils out and cling to any trifle in their way. I have been mighty anxious, sir, lest my Delia should throw away her heart; and I have done my best to show her what was good, that she might prefer it to the bad, and to indulge her wishes, that she might have no inducement to do wrong. Your aunt tells me that you know her history. 'Tis that which has been ever in my thoughts, filling me with dread lest Delia should suffer her fate. When I

first saw her, she was just about Delia's age, young and beautiful, full of good intentions and earnest hopes, and striving all in her power to do well. Lord, sir, if you had seen her taking to gardening, just because she thought it was right for her to do so, and not because she liked it—for she had no natural turn for it, and was for ever running in-doors to wash her white hands when they got a little soiled, which to be sure was a sign she was not intended for the occupation—but then she'd scratch and hoe up all my seeds and young cuttings, priding herself on making everything nice and smooth. And she'd cry, sir, when no one was near, and wipe her tears away, and try to sing and be cheerful. Oh, she had a heart soft and yearning, and had she given it to one who gave her back love for love, she would have been a loyal and happy woman! And now look at her, Mr.

Falkland, selfish and careless, with a heart that has ceased to beat, and knows neither hope nor regret. And so, sir, 'tis not alone for what Delia gains by your love, but for what she escapes by having it, that I rejoice. She has given you her whole heart, sir ; for though she loves gaiety, and flattery too, I cannot deny it, she is not a jilt. Thank God, she has not been led, like some poor maids, to cut up her heart in little parcels, and scatter them among a crowd of lovers !

We talked for some time of Delia, for he was as eager to talk of her as I to listen to her praises ; then, turning the subject, he said :

‘ Well, now, Mr. Falkland, let us arrange about the wedding.’

‘ ’Tis too early to talk of that,’ I said, laughing.

‘ Too early—not a day ; asking your pardon for the contradiction. There’s ne’er

a young lover more opposed to long betrothals than I am. There will be a rare to-do about dresses and the like ; but money will make the mare to go, and I warrant every furbelow will be finished in three weeks.'

'I shall count myself fortunate if I can marry in three years,' said I.

'Three years !' cried he, aghast. 'Is this the fashion ?'

'That for the fashion,' said I, with a snap of my fingers. 'Were my position made, and Delia willing, I'd marry to-morrow.'

'What position ?' asked Mr. Adams, still with an astounded air.

'A position of independence——'

'Good God !' cried he, bursting into a laugh. 'Do you think I value my child at so high a price that I shall refuse to give her a dowry ? Look you here, Mr. Falkland,' he continued, becoming suddenly

grave when he found that I did not respond to his pleasantry, ‘I can live much more comfortably on a hundred a year than on a couple of thousand, and the day Delia marries, she shall take the odd nineteen hundred for her income. I don’t say you can live as I am living now without dipping into your capital: for, you see, I have to subscribe such a lot to keep my friends in humour; but I think—I really do think you can live comfortably on nineteen hundred. You are not an extravagant man, and Delia, I am sure, will be reasonable. Hang that fellow with his Mongolfier-coach! I’d have seen his neck as long as my arm before I’d have given him a thousand pounds, had I known that you and Delia was come together.’

‘When I am earning two hundred a year, I will marry Delia if she will have me,’ said I.

‘But I tell you, Mr. Falkland, sir, she shall

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have nineteen hundred a year, or it may be more than that—my lawyer knows; and then this house is my freehold, and everything in it is paid for. All shall be yours. Cheshunt for me! I doubt not you'll give me a shake-down when I come to town.'

'You don't understand me, Mr. Adams——'

'No, I'll be hanged if I do!' he retorted warmly.

'I must have a position of independence. The more money my wife has, the better for her and me too; but I cannot depend upon that for my subsistence. I cannot take money from her to pay my debts!'

'You don't suppose Delia would make you ask her for money whenever you need it? You don't think she would hold the purse? Why, she does not know the difference 'twixt a guinea and a shilling, save by the colour, and I verily believe she would

throw the money in the street that the man she loves scorned to share. You'll be the same flesh and blood—Gad's me !

‘ I must be earning my living,’ I contested.

‘ So you may, sir. The Lord forbid I should counsel you against that, for 'tis prodigiously more uncomfortable for a healthy man to give up work and be idle, than to give up idleness and work hard.’

I protested that I must wait at least until my means of subsistence were more certain than at present.

‘ I can't understand it, sir—I can't understand it at all,’ he said.

‘ I think Delia will,’ said I.

‘ Perhaps she may, sir ; she was mightily pleased because you refused to earn a thousand pounds in altering Adams's Hall. There's another bit of property, sir, that you could have for the taking.’

‘ I shall be heartily glad to take it one of these days.’

‘ Yes ; if you’re not twice as proud when you’re earning two hundred a year as you are now you’re earning one hundred. Well, well,’ he proceeded, with a sigh, ‘ there never was a good apple without a maggot, though it puzzles me why Providence puts the maggot there. I suppose this pride comes with education. At any rate, I have none of it. If Delia and you are of one mind on this subject, I suppose there’s no help for it. But, ’tis an early frost on my young beans—so proper and flourishing they looked to be coming up, too, five minutes back. Three years !’

‘ The time may be less.’

‘ I don’t suppose it will, unless I manage to get into debt. I warrant you’d marry to-morrow if Delia was in want. My old master told me ’twas a poor reward for my

services to give me money, for I should find more trouble with it than ever I could have for the want of it, and now, sure enough—— No, I won't say that, sir, for had matters been disposed any other way, I shouldn't have the cause to be grateful which I have now. I'm like a farmer grumbling because his crop is too good, and so I beg you to take no notice of me, sir.'

It was broad daylight when I got home. I threw myself on my bed, only taking off my coat, for I had no intention of lying there more than an hour or two, nor of going to work at the usual time. I fell asleep after lying an hour thinking, and never woke till mid-day. The maid had set down my breakfast outside the door, being unable to wake me; the chocolate was cold. I swallowed a mouthful, and hurried away to Cornhill, where, after exhausting the patience of a goldsmith, I at length selected

a ring from the number he had laid out before me, and with that in my pocket took a coach to Park Lane, testily beating my foot upon the floor, and thrusting my head from the window whenever a lumbering waggon blocked the road, or from other causes the coachman slackened his speed.

I was shown into the drawing-room, and there, after but a few moments' delay, Delia came to me. She was in a loose morning wrap of soft white merino, and her hair was caught up loosely in a knot—for I had surprised her in the midst of her toilet. Flinging the door to behind her, she ran across the room with her arms stretched towards me, and as I caught her to my heart she nestled her head against my shoulder with a little cry of joy. Presently I led her to a chair, and seating myself beside her, I fetched out the ring from my pocket, took her hand, and slipped it on her finger. She

knew not what I was about until she found the ring on her finger ; then she cried :

‘ Oh, ’tis a betrothal ring ! ’Tis the pledge of your love, George !’

‘ Yes, dear,’ said I.

She lifted her hand, and kissed the ring again and again.

‘ Thou dear pledge of my George’s love !’ she murmured, ‘ thou shalt never quit this hand. Day and night for ever thou shalt cling to my finger, as the love of him shall cling about my heart !’

If I said anything in reply, ’twas certainly not worth remembering ; I recollect only that I got her in my arms once more, and clasped her to me in an ecstacy of love.

She had several rings upon her fingers ; she looked at them, and, choosing the simplest, began to draw it off.

‘ Papa spoke to me of your resolve,’ said she. ‘ You told him I should understand

your motive, and I do, dear George. He said he believed that no one else but you would make such an objection, and he was right, and I agree with him, for sure there lives not another man in the world so noble as my George. Whatever you do and think is right. Did you bid me wait a dozen years, I would not let a murmur escape my lips. There, 'tis off. Take it, love, as a keepsake rather than a pledge, for my heart is yours now, beyond all claiming.'

The tiny circle would go no lower than the first joint upon my little finger, so she whipped the string of velvet from her white throat, slipped it through the ring, knotted it, and passed it round my neck.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE CULMINATION OF FALKLAND'S LUCKY STAR.

**B**EFORE going to the studio, I went home to change my clothes. At the door I met Lord and Lady Kestral coming out. My aunt gave me her hand, while my uncle took a pinch of snuff. When he had finished this business, and restored his box to his fob, he flicked the dust from his frill, and held out his finger to me in a distant, patronizing manner, which contrasted strongly with the warm approaches of preceding days. I looked at

the extended finger, made him a bow, and put my hands in my pocket ; upon which he looked me up and down, and with a little shrug of the shoulder turned upon his heel, snapping his thumb and finger over his shoulder at me, to signify, I suppose, that he had done with me, and cared not what became of me. I was not at all grieved by this change in his affection ; indeed, it would have caused me considerable embarrassment had he held out his hand, and proffered undiminished regard for me, since I could not have taken his hand without feeling myself a hypocrite, and was not at liberty to explain my motive for refusing it.

Within doors, I was met by my landlady, who, putting on the most ceremonious and frigid air, begged to inform me that henceforth she must double my rent if I insisted upon staying in her house.

‘ Be assured, madam,’ said I, ‘ that I shall

certainly not insist on staying with you under those conditions ; but I shall be glad to know your reason for wishing to get rid of me.'

'His lordship's son is coming to reside here, and his lordship has expressed a desire to have the whole of the upper part of the house to himself. Moreover, as a Church-woman, I have a strong objection to letting my shed in the yard be used as a receptacle for indelicate images.'

I laughed heartily, and promised I would find another lodging by the end of the week, and rid her of my indelicate images, which consisted of some plaster casts that served me as models.

These incidents, trifling as they may seem, were not without significance, though at the moment I gave them not a second thought. It is clear that my uncle had heard Mr. Adams addressed as Honest

Davie, and that he suspected me of conniving with Davie and my aunt to blind him. He had abandoned his scheme of making my fortune for a surer one of making his own, and he wished to get me out of the way that Lady Kestral might not avail herself of my sympathy to carry out designs that might be inimical to his. It was equally evident that he intended Mr. Randolph Bond to play a part in his operations against Honest Davie. These reflections did not strike me at the time; for I was in great haste to get to my work, being for the first time unpunctual, and I very shortly had a subject for consideration which drove out of my head all others except that of my betrothal to Delia.

When I reached the studio, Mr. Rogers met me with a cordial ‘Good-morning, Falkland!’ and when I had apologized for being so much behind my hour, he said :

‘I have been waiting with some impatience for you—not because there is any pressing need of your services here, but because I have something to offer which I think you will be glad to accept.’

‘You have been very good to me——’

‘Not at all more than I wished to be. The fact is, Falkland, you are too good to be here, and I feel ashamed every time I set you upon work that a man with one-twentieth part of your capacity could do. Still, knowing your position, it would have been a queer method of proving my appreciation of your talent to take that work away from you while you had nothing better in view. To come to the point: a gentleman of Sevenoaks—Mr. Thomas Talbot, Talbot Hall—wants a portrait made of his infant son, and he asked me to do it. As I told him, he couldn’t have picked out a worse artist for the work. An old married

man, with a dozen children, and the horror hanging about him of being presently saluted with the squall of a thirteenth, is not likely to take pleasantly to the study of an infant. I should make a faithful likeness of the child, no doubt—in its worst aspect; but that would not satisfy the young and sentimental parents. Now, this is just the sort of thing you could do, and do well, Falkland. I've seen you playing with that little wretch that the nurse brings in here sometimes—playing, when you should have been sticking to your chisel, sir; and I like you none the less for it. You have a pleasant sort of marrying look about you, and I should think, if you saw a pretty child, you would fall to thinking that you might have such an one of your own one of these days. Now, that's the spirit that will make you seize the most pleasing aspect of this little Talbot, and present a portrait

which will delight the parents, and make them for ever thankful to me for putting the commission in your hands.'

'Do you mean, sir——' I cried eagerly, as my thoughts flew to Delia, and the prospect of making her mine.

'I mean, Falkland; that if you will accept the commission I have refused, and will relieve me of the shame of employing a man at two pounds a week who ought to be paid twenty, I shall feel very much obliged to you.'

When I had expressed my gratitude as best I could—for despite his pleasantries, I saw that Mr. Rogers had given me the commission in pure generosity—he said :

'I would lose no time, Falkland. The parents are burning with impatience, and the brat may catch the measles in a week. Take the coach that leaves the Borough at five—you'll enjoy the ride. I'll write a

letter that will insure a warm reception for you at Talbot Hall, and you can see the prodigy to-morrow morning, and arrange for sittings at once. Can I lend you any money?’

I had money and to spare, I replied.

‘So much the better,’ said he, and cutting short my thanks, he went off to write the letter of introduction, while I collected my tools and made them up in a parcel. He returned shortly, and put the letter in my hand, together with a paper of guineas, which he said was the amount of my wages up to that day.

‘And now,’ said he, seeing that I was deeply moved by his generosity—for this good man had a strong dislike to any expression of sentiment, though I believe he had as warm a heart as any in the world—‘let me see the back of you without delay.

You must walk sharp to get over London Bridge by five. Farewell.'

Once more I returned to my lodgings to make a bundle of my clothes, which I intended to change at the inn when I reached Sevenoaks; but when I had got all that was necessary and had my foot upon the stairs, I reflected that I should have no opportunity of telling Delia of my good fortune before reaching my destination, when the mail-bags might be closed, and so no chance of sending a letter till the next day. And now that her happiness and mine were so closely bound together, I could not bear to think that a whole day must pass before that dear creature participated in the joy that animated my soul; so I went back into my room and sat down to write a few lines there and then, intending to make up for lost time by running all the way to Southwark, if necessary.

'Twas the first letter I had written to Delia—the first love-letter I had ever composed; but the difficulty I found was not in beginning or continuing my letter, but in coming to an end of all I had to say. I know not how long I sat there writing my thoughts and smiling at the paper as though I were whispering the words into her ear, but this is certain, that by the time I had seen my letter duly stamped, and turned my face towards the Borough, I discovered I had just five-and-twenty minutes to make the journey in.

I reached the booking-house at five minutes after five, and just as many after the starting of the coach. The next coach started at seven. 'Two hours will make no grand difference,' said I to myself—little knowing how woeful a change, alas! those two hours were to make in my future—and, in sooth, I was not ill-pleased to have a little

time at my disposal ; for between one adventure and another, I had not eaten any solid food for nigh upon four-and-twenty hours. I whiled away the next hour, therefore, very agreeably at the Old Tabard, in company with a cold sirloin of beef and a brown toby of ale.

The journey was very agreeable as far as Bromley, but from that point it ceased to be pleasant, for the rain began to drizzle, and there was no light to make the road interesting ; added to which, the coachman, having drunk more than was good for him, couldn't keep his eyes open for more than three minutes together, and in these intervals beat his horses to such an extent, that their headlong gallop set the coach swaying from side to side, to the imminent danger of breaking a spring or throwing us over into the ditch.

We were about a mile beyond the village

of Otford ; the coachman had thrashed his cattle into a gallop and fallen asleep again, and we were tearing along the road, which there makes a curve in the direction of Sevenoaks, when suddenly the horses stumbled over a billet of wood laid across the road, and the next moment the coach gave a lurch and fell over with a crash, pitching me and the rest of the outsides on to the bank by the roadside. At the same instant some four or five rascals burst out of the wood, hallooing and shouting, and fell upon us with a demand for the surrender of our purses.

For a minute I knew not where I was—I saw lights moving hither and thither ; I heard the roaring of the footpads—who do as much by roaring and intimidation as by actual violence—and the screaming of terrified passengers, and I felt, when I moved, the thorns of the bramble, into

which I had been thrown, pricking into my flesh when I moved. I hoped to escape observation, and lay as still on my bed of thorns as human endurance would allow ; but my good luck had deserted me, and one of the rascals, having rifled one victim, and running off in search of another, stumbled upon me.

‘ Money or your life, b——t your eyes !’ he bawled, clapping his knee on my side, and thrusting a lantern in my face, that I might the better see a pistol barrel that was pressed against my head. ‘ Turn out your pockets, d—— you, or I’ll make short work with your carcase !’

I turned out my pockets, and he laid hold of my purse.

‘ Han’t you nothing more nowheres ?’ he shouted, with an oath.

‘ You can see for yourself,’ said I.

He set down the lantern, and gave a grab

at my waistcoat ; and my Delia's throat-velvet showing upon my white shirt, he lugged it out, and finding the ring to which it was attached, he snapped it away with a jerk.

‘ You don't have that,’ I cried, throwing his knee off my side, and laying hold of his throat at the same moment. The sudden jerk threw him over, and he fell on the lantern ; but I held him by the throat with a desperate resolution not to leave him while he had my Delia's ring or I had life.

We struggled in the dark. The passengers, having been stripped of their purses, had fled into the wood as if their lives were yet in danger ; the highwaymen, concerned only for their own safety, left their comrade to settle his own affair with me ; the guard had gone off at the top of his speed for assistance ; only the drunken driver stood his ground, and he, having come upon a heap

of stones for the repair of the road, had from the commencement of the attack been sedulously flinging the flints at any moving object, and adding to the general confusion by shouting curses at the topmost pitch of his voice. Happily his aim was not so good as his intention, nor his hand so steady as his purpose, or I might have fared even worse than I did.

My antagonist was a burly countryman—heavier and stronger than I was; but the fury of my attack took him by surprise, and he was frightened by the dogged perseverance with which I held on to his throat. I had got astride of his body, and no matter how he twisted and struggled, I still kept my hold. He managed to get his pistol against my body, and drew the trigger, but fortunately the priming had fallen from the pan, so it did me no mischief, and he presently lost the weapon, probably in attempt-

ing to get the barrel in his hand with a view to hammering me with the butt. Then he endeavoured, with all his might, to throw me over; and failing in that, he, with a convulsive effort—I believe the fellow, by this time, was pretty nearly strangled—wriggled on to his side, and then on to his breast, wrenching his throat from my clutch.

‘Now, b——t you! you shall take your turn,’ he muttered between his teeth; and he drew his arms up by his side, that he might raise his body and throw me off. I made for his arms the moment he had dragged his throat from my hands; and now, laying hold of the hand that held my treasure, I gave it a sharp twist round, and turned that arm over his back. He held his hand clasped, but I could feel the velvet, and I tore at his fingers to get at the ring. He grunted. I had to do with the toughest part of his anatomy, and I might have

wrenched at his fingers the whole night long without effect.

‘Open your hand!’ I shouted.

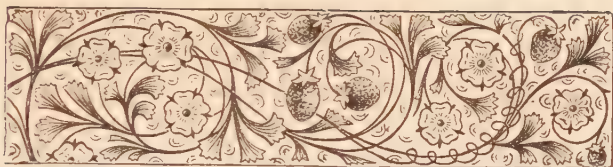
He gave another grunt for reply.

I caught his wrist with my two hands, and lifted his bent arm upwards; he howled with pain, but still held his fingers clenched. I gave a jerk that made the bone crack in the socket of his shoulder. The howl became a scream, and his hand opened.

I saw the spread of his fingers, and the ring lying there on his palm, and saw distinctly, for either the night had grown suddenly light, or the intense excitement of my senses had given me the faculty of a nyctalops. I seized the prize, and let his hand go, fearing nothing but the loss of my ring. Now I had that, I was satisfied. I had no wish to follow up the advantage I had gained—I bore the fellow no ill-will, so rejoiced was I with my repossession of my

Delia's gift. He was welcome to my purse, and free to go whither he chose. Whether he would have been equally content to let the struggle end there is doubtful ; another hand determined my fate. At the very moment we were rising to our feet, a flash and a bang came from an adjacent thicket, and a slug tore through my arm. I staggered a pace or two, stumbled, fell, and lost consciousness.





## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SETTING OF FALKLAND'S LUCKY STAR.

**A**S my wits returned to me, I heard the tramp of feet, and felt that I was being carried. My arm was numb ; I tried to move it, and suffered in consequence such excruciating pain that a sick giddiness ensued, and I fell once more into a swoon. Presently I fell to wondering what had happened. I was not being carried now. There was a murmur of voices. I opened my eyes, and found a pair of clean white curtains over my head. I turned my head sideways, and saw a woman and a man

standing beside the bed, looking at me. On a table close at hand was a basin, and beside it a sponge; the edge of the basin was spotted with blood.

‘Well, and how are we now?’ asked some one from the other side of the bed, in a professional tone of cheerfulness.

Still perplexed, I turned my head, and perceived that the speaker was to all appearances a doctor. Suddenly the recollection of the struggle came into my mind.

I wanted to see if I still held the ring I had regained, and, moving my hands, felt a twinge in my arm that brought a cry from my lips.

‘We mustn’t move that arm, my dear sir,’ the doctor said. ‘Let it lie so—there. Does it pain us now?’

‘Where is my ring?’ I asked.

‘Here it is, my pretty gentleman,’ cried the woman, pulling up her skirt to get at

her pocket. 'What did I say,' she asked, turning to the man, whom I found to be her husband, 'but that 'twould be the very first thing his honour asked for. I knew 'twas a token, by the velvet, and by the way he held on to it, in spite of the wound. There it is, sir, as good as 'twas found, for thof we be but poor, we are honest as the day, though I say it that shouldn't; but 'tis more than of my saying, for Dr. Drench, I warrant, has heard as much, and, indeed, if he han't, proof is more than wind, which that ring proves, as many women would have kept for their pains, and said nought to no one. But, I thank God, I'm none of such, and have been bred up like a gentlewoman, thof so be my husband does keep an inn, and would scorn to do anything unhandsome; for the Scripture tells us we should do as we'd be done by, and I know very well that a gentleman prizes his

keepsakes at more than their value, and gives twice what they would fetch rather than an honest woman should lose by her principles.'

'True, my good woman,' said the doctor persuasively. 'No doubt the gentleman will reward you handsomely for your services. But we must have silence at present.'

'Oh, as for that, you may be assured I shall not disturb anyone, for I'm none of your talkative women, who let their tongues run on fifteen to the dozen, I—nor such as think of their own claims before all the rest, as Dr. Spiller, who lives not a hundred miles away, may tell you, Dr. Drench, for he slipped a guinea in my hand the last time I fetched him to see the lady who was took ill in this very room, and that before he knew whether his patient would last out a day or a month.'

‘That’s true,’ said the husband, speaking for the first time.

‘*Can’t* you hold your tongue?’ asked the wife indignantly. ‘Han’t you heard the doctor preaching a sermont about silence? But you’re like all the men, you must be talking.’

She did not cease to talk, but I ceased to follow her. I was feeble, for I had lost much blood; and now that I had my Delia’s ring, my mind rested for a time, and the babble of the landlady’s voice in my ears lulled me into a short sleep. In a vague dreamy fashion I remembered that I was to see Mr. Talbot, and arrange with him for the portrait of his child, which was to be my stepping-stone to fame and future happiness.

‘In which arm was I shot?’ I asked myself, suddenly awaking with a terrible apprehension of the calamity that

had befallen me. The dull aching was in my right arm.

The woman was still talking; her husband had left the room, but the doctor remained.

‘What is the matter with my arm?’ I asked.

‘We have been shot through it, my dear sir; be calm, lie quite still, and on no account let us agitate ourselves.’

‘Shall I be able to use it in—in a week?’

‘A week, my dear sir! Clearly, you do not understand the gravity of the case. A ball, or more probably a slug of lead, has passed through our arm, fracturing our ulna, or *hoc-le-majus*, at its upper extremity or near the seat of our *brachiaëus internus*, and severely lacerating, or laying open, our adjacent muscles. It remains to be seen whether a *metasyncerisis* is possible, or whether we must have our arm off.’

‘God help me!’ I cried with a groan.

‘Do not despond, my dear sir. We are young, our constitution is good, and our bone has been carefully set; and though mortification may set in, fever arise, and death result, there are at present no dangerous symptoms nor supervenient signs. With proper care and attention, combined with perfect rest of body and mind, we may get out of our bed in a month.’

‘He’s welcome to lie there for three, with all my heart,’ put in the landlady. ‘He’ll do better nowhere else, I warrant; and so be a gentleman pays like a gentleman——’

‘You think I may use my arm in a month?’ I said to the doctor.

‘I said, my dear sir, we might get out of bed in a month, which is as much as to say we might begin to use our legs; but as to our arms, ’tis another matter altogether; and though we may possibly at the end of a year be able to carry it without a sling,

I doubt extremely if we shall ever perfectly recover the entire use of it.'

This was indeed a cruel blow, for it overthrew my every hope. I must send back to Delia the ring she had given me ; for I could no longer hold her to her promise, even though I sacrificed my pride. The only satisfaction left me was to think that I had still that ring to send her ; but it did not lessen my despair and grief ; and while the doctor and the landlady gabbled on, I bit my lip to keep it from twitching ; for I was as weak as a child, and the thought of my desolation and ruin filled me with woe. I had the ring in my left hand, and I slipped it up to my lips ; then, unable to contain myself longer, I burst into tears, covering my face with the sheet.

'Come, come, we mustn't give way,' said the doctor.

'Don't you think a nip of rum-s'rub would

cheer up the poor gentleman ?' asked the landlady.

Ashamed of my weakness, I wiped the tears away, and gulping down my sorrow, pulled the sheet back from my face.

'Doctor,' said I, 'is there an hospital near ?'

'An hospital,' cried he and the landlady, in a breath.

'An hospital,' I repeated ; 'for there I must go. I gave up my purse, and it contained all I had in the world. My living depended upon my right arm, and now that is gone I must live upon charity.'

'Had I known that,' cried the woman, with an exclamation, 'I wouldn't have been so mad as to give up that ring ; and let me tell you, I shall go this very morning to the magistrate and inform him ; for it isn't likely a man with no more money than he carries in his pocket should have honestly

come by a ring that's worth twenty guineas if a penny. A pretty fool I was to take you in at all, for I might have seen what you was by the looks of you. And to think you have spoiled a pair of sheets, and that I've stood here watching you like your own mother all the night, and sending my husband out to fetch a doctor for you. I vow you must have a wicked heart indeed to be calling out when, for all you knew, 'twas the last moment you had to live—"Delia, Delia," instead of telling honest people you had no money to pay for accommodation. Delia, indeed—a pretty farthing miss, I warrant—one of your Drury Lane misses.'

'Hold your tongue this instant,' I cried, in a rage. 'I shall be able to raise enough money to pay every obligation I owe; but by Heaven, you shall have never a farthing if you don't rid me of your company this moment.'

She was much too furious with disappointment, and with chagrin in having parted with the ring, to be reasonable, and it was not until she had exhausted her passion that she yielded to the doctor's persuasions and left the room.

‘Now, then, my man,’ said he, coming back to my side after fastening the door, and speaking with a very different manner. ‘Is it a fact that you have no money?’

‘A positive fact.’

‘It’s a d—d bad job for me. Out of my bed all night, you know. There was no necessity to stay here, to be sure, but from what that confounded woman said, and the ring she showed me, and, I may add, the appearance of your face and hands, I thought I had to do with a gentleman, you know!’

‘I hope I have done nothing to make you alter that conclusion.’

‘Oh, no; you’re polite enough for a

prince ; but a man with the manners of a chairman, so he have money, is a gentleman, from my point of view. It's a d—d bad job !' he added reflectively, as he sat himself on the corner of the bed and glanced at his boots.

‘It's a bad job for me,’ said I.

‘Yes, that's what I am thinking about now. It's natural to think of one's self first. Put my best boots on. You see, if you go to the hospital, it's ten to one but you'll lose your arm. They've got a couple of young fellows there training for the naval surgery, and naturally they're anxious to get on in amputation. There's no earthly reason why your arm should come off, except in the interest of science ; and if you depend upon your right arm for a living, you know—I should be sorry to see you going about with a stump, you know. I thought so ! I did catch my skirt on that d—d door-

nail in my hurry.' The latter words were uttered in a grumbling murmur, as he held the candle near his torn coat. 'The question is,' he added, as he set down the light, 'how to keep out of the hospital. You can't dress your arm yourself, and you can't trust any of these country folks to do it, hang 'em. They'd be sticking on some mess of herbs or rancid fat that was used by their grandmother, and which killed her, no doubt. I know these women—the best of 'em won't believe that science is better than their own prejudices. You don't want much looking to; ten minutes a day would do. You can get along without physic, unless you worry yourself into a fever. Ten minutes a day,' he murmured, in a tone of reflection, 'say half an hour with coming and going, that's three hours and a half a week; four times three and a half, twelve—fourteen—that's a

good long day, say a pound ; splints, bottles, drugs, say five shillings ; board and lodging, say two pounds, that's three pounds five.'

He made these calculations looking at the ceiling, and stroking his hand down over his mouth.

'Don't wish to part with that ring, I suppose ?'

'Quite impossible,' I replied.

'You have some friends, I suppose ?'

'Yes.'

'Sound—good ?'

'Undoubtedly.'

'Good enough to lend you five pounds amongst 'em ?'

'Yes,' I said, after reflection.

'Then you write for it, and I'll undertake to cure you, and pay all your expenses in the meantime—Mother Brooke down below into the bargain, and she shan't have more than

she deserves, I promise you. An old harridan! You did well to get your ring as you did; you have to thank your gentlemanly looks for that. She would never have given it if she hadn't relied upon getting double its value through your sense of gratitude. We must get out of this as quickly as we can.' He gave a short laugh at this slip back into his formal mode of speaking, and then, catching sight of his skirt, began to damn his ill-luck in putting on his best to come and see me. I thought at the time his odd behaviour was the result of an eccentric disposition; but now I am more inclined to believe it arose chiefly from the natural goodness of his heart, which made him desirous of putting me at my ease.

'When shall I be able to move?' I asked.

'Oh! if nothing unpleasant appears, I think you may be carried away to-night. I have a chair, and I know an old woman

who'll be glad to take you as her lodger for ten shillings a week—clean and respectable old woman—cheerful room, plain food, you know, and not too much of it, but enough.'

'You reckon to cure me in a month!' I cried, remembering his calculation for board and lodging.

'Cured, so that you may have no fear of the young fellows at the hospital, and can do without me. I don't promise that you will be able to do anything with your arm. You were shot with a slug, and the d—d thing's torn a piece out of one of the muscles which Nature may not restore. You may always be weak with that arm, and the best thing is to look the matter bang in the face, and see what you can do for a living with one arm only. Expecting the worst, the least advantages are appreciated, and everything that can cheer your spirits will help to heal your arm. What was your trade?'

‘Sculpture.’

‘Ah! that accounts for the look of your face and hands. What else can you do?’

‘I can do nothing with my left arm,’ I replied bitterly.

‘D—d bad job!’ the doctor said again, rubbing his sleepy eyes with the palms of his hands; then, after a yawn, he asked, ‘Can you do nothing with your head: is there nought you can teach?’

‘I know French and Italian well.’

He made no immediate response. He had folded his arms, and sat leaning against the bedpost with his chin on his breast. I thought he was asleep. Suddenly he rose.

‘I must go home—been here all night, you know. I can do nothing to your arm before the evening. I’ll tell the woman below what food to prepare for you, and insist upon its being brought to you by the man.

She shan't worry you. In the evening you shall be moved—I'll see about the room for you on my way home. 'Twill be soon enough then to write to your friends for money; though whether they lend it or not matters little, for the deuce is in it if we can't find some one in Sevenoaks who will be glad to get a smattering of French and Italian.'

The good doctor looked at the bandages and splints upon my arm, arranged the bed-clothes, tied a piece of string to the bell-pull, and laid the end upon the bed within reach of my left hand, gave me a few instructions, and then, bidding me send for him if I felt in need of more assistance than the man could give me, nodded a farewell, and left me.

The day passed wearily away. My arm gave me such pain that I could neither sleep nor compose my thoughts in any order; and my disjointed reflections were all of a gloomy

and foreboding character. The monotony was broken once by an unexpected visit.

In the afternoon the landlord came to me, saying that the coach-driver had discovered some property which he believed belonged to me, and which he begged to give me with his own hands. I gave permission for the man to enter, which he presently did with his hat in one hand, and in the other the bundle of clothes I had with me when the coach was upset. He closed the door behind him, and came towards me, bowing and scraping at each step.

‘I ax your pardon humbly, your honour,’ he began, ‘for venturing for to come, but finding this here bundle in the road, I thought as how it might be yours, and made so bold in the hope as it might please you to get it.’

‘It is mine,’ said I; ‘but at present I have no means of rewarding you for your

trouble'—for I conceived that his prodigious civility arose from the hope of profit.

'Reward, your honour ! don't mention it. I'm none of your crafty rogues who do a good action to better themselves. When I see a chance of helping folks I helps 'em ; and when I see my dooty upon me, I does it, and I asks nothing from nobody in return, excep' that they won't misunderstand my motives. A more good-intentioned, civiler coachman, though I say it, don't run the London road. And if so be I do, nows-and-thens, take a drop too much, 'tis the fault of my good-nature, for 'twould break my heart to affront a gent by refusing to drink at his expense. Mind you, sir,' he said, with an air of caution, 'I am prepared to take my oath I never do take a drop too much, but just for the sake of argument, *supposin'* I did, you see as it's my misfortune and not my fault ; and I'm sure such a gentleman as your

honour wouldn't say a word to ruin old Jo, if it comes to a investigation over this here upsetting of the coach by them rascally highwaymen—would you now, sir ?

‘ I suppose no accident would have happened if it had not been for the highwaymen ?’

‘ Lord bless your honour's soul, no. If I did go a bit fast, as these here precious clever insides has been prating about, 'twas only because I was too anxious for you all. I knowed how glad you'd be to get to your journey's end. Who was to see that ere billet of wood ? Why, sir, a weasel couldn't a-seen it, such a pitchy dark night as that.’

I laughed a little.

‘ Glad to see your honour is not much hurt,’ he said, evidently greatly relieved by this sign of my temper.

‘ 'Tis enough,’ I said.

‘I seed him do it, sir—a man about fourteen hands high, I reckon—sort of black man with red hair—he kim sneaking along, hearing his mate in trouble, and let fly at you with a double-barrelled pistol, he did.’

‘You saw him a good deal more distinctly than the billet of wood.’

‘To be sure I did, your honour; for I was just coming up myself to lend you a hand, I was. I’ll take my dying solemn oath I meant to help you, sir. It was good-nature all over—and it’s that as is always getting me into trouble; but I hope your honour won’t bear me any grudge on that account.’

‘Why should I?’

‘You see, sir,’ said he, twisting his hat round and round between his hands, ‘someone let off the guard’s blunderbust, and they say I did it—just because I was the

only one who had the courage to stay there ; but why should I shoot at your honour ? and if so be I had fired the blunderbust, you may be sure, sir, 'twould only have been with the very best of intentions.'

' 'Tis done,' said I ; 'and whether you or another shot me, the result is the same.'

He argued a long time to convince me that I had been shot by the man of fourteen hands with red hair ; but his good intentions served him as ill in this respect as they had served him on other occasions, for they left me no room to doubt that I owed my hurt to him. Surely no highwayman in his right senses would have fired hap-hazard to serve his friend, nor would that friend, being thus served, have left me in possession of the ring for which we had so fiercely struggled.



## CHAPTER VII.

DR. DRENCH : HIS ADVICE, AND WHAT CAME  
OF IT.

**T**HE doctor was as good as his word. In the evening he came, settled with the landlady of the inn, and took me away in a chair to the lodgings he had engaged for me. Then, at my dictation, he wrote a letter to Mr. Rogers, telling him that I had met with an accident which would prevent me executing the commission he had given me, begging him to keep the fact a secret from inquiring friends, and finally asking him to lend me

the sum of five pounds until I was in a position to repay him.

Mr. Rogers replied in person, coming to Sevenoaks the following night, and finding me just as the doctor had finished dressing my arm. He sat with me until midnight, doing all in his power to cheer my spirits, and making merry with the doctor over a bottle of port, for which he sent out. The doctor had at first assumed his professional manner, speaking in the first person of the plural number, and introducing as many anatomical expressions as he could ; but, finding that Mr. Rogers was as like himself as his own brother, he gradually fell into the free-and-easy colloquial style which was natural to him. He was fond of the bottle and good stories ; and now that he was neither sleepy nor disappointed nor concerned for the condition of his clothes, he waxed as lively as a cricket.

The following day Mr. Rogers called upon me again.

‘I have seen Mr. Talbot,’ said he, in his careless way, ‘and told him that you could not undertake to do the portrait for a month or two. Didn’t tell him the reason, of course; don’t want sympathy. Left him to conclude that you had more important business to attend to, which is the best recommendation an artist can have. That doctor is a good fellow; he’ll not neglect you, and if he can get your arm into working order he will. He hopes to bring you round in a month or two—and so do I. Still, I should adopt his notion of teaching if I were in your place. It would kill you to be idle. Here’s a note to keep you out of want’ (he slipped under the candlestick on the chimneypiece a piece of paper, which I afterwards found was a bill for four times the sum I had asked), ‘and if that’s not enough, you

know where to come for more. Hum, ten to three,' looking at his watch, 'just time to get down to the coach. Good-bye, Falkland.'

He shook my left hand as coolly as if he had done nothing in the world to deserve my gratitude, and went out of the room whistling a tune to put an end to my thanks.

His kindness was not a mere impulse. About a week later, a carrier brought me a boxful of books and plays, labelled 'sedatives,' with just one line written on a sheet of paper within—'Hope you are going on well.—FRED. ROGERS.'

My doctor was no less considerate. Instead of coming once a day, and for half an hour, as he had proposed, he would drop in two or three times, and spend best part of the evening with me, always with a pretext for his visit to relieve me from a sense of

obligation. Now it was because he had nothing better to do, then because he wanted to borrow a book or return one; and as we both had a taste for literature, we found the subject for many pleasant hours of conversation in the plays, etc., which Mr. Rogers had sent me.

When I was strong enough to get about, he introduced me to a squire living a little beyond Sevenoaks, who wished seven of his family of twelve children to learn the French language, which I agreed to teach them for fifteen shillings a week, giving them four hours' tuition a day. He also carried me to the vicar, who was a man of letters, with a turn for versification, and with him I arranged to translate Dante's masterpiece, that he might do it into English hexameters, giving him an hour a day for six shillings a week. Thus was I now placed in a way to pay my current expenses, and even lay

by a sum to discharge my debt to Mr. Rogers.

I had every reason to thank Providence for my good fortune in having found friends in my adversity, and the means of maintaining my independence. Nevertheless, I suffered deeply, and found that gratitude for the blessings I received but ill supplied the place of hope of better. For at the end of a month, finding my arm, despite the doctor's constant care, was still useless, I began to despair of ever again employing it in my art, and upon that the realization of my hopes depended.

I saw that either I must give up the thought of making Delia my wife, or sacrifice every vestige of pride, and do a thing which was utterly repugnant to my taste. 'Twas impossible that I should earn my living by teaching languages while my wife stayed at home in luxury and idleness ; and it seemed

to me no less impossible that I should live upon her bounty, however gracefully and freely it was bestowed.

I fretted a great deal about this time, for, do what I would to divert my thoughts from the subject until the condition of my arm should be so far pronounced that I might decide upon my future course either one way or the other, the question of Delia's happiness and of mine continually recurred to me, tormenting my mind with some fresh difficulty. If I took a book, my eye would follow the lines mechanically to the foot of the page, without conveying a single idea to my brain ; and my thoughts would wander away to Delia even when my friend Drench was talking to me. This constant anxiety and depression played against my recovery by keeping me in a low state of health, and I could see that my doctor was greatly concerned about my arm, though he declared it

was going on famously ; for he changed his treatment again and again, which clearly indicated his dissatisfaction ; moreover, he would fall to cursing at trifles after looking at my wound, an evil habit to which he was much addicted whenever a matter of grave importance caused him anxiety.

After dressing my arm one morning, he began in his usual style :

‘Getting on famously. Took a bad sixpence yesterday—d—d bad sixpence!—and don’t know who on earth gave it me. What do you eat for dinner now, Falkland?’

‘Whatever Mrs. Parsons gets for me.’

‘And I suppose you don’t care whether ’tis mutton or beef, or, in fact, whether ’tis much or little?’

‘Not greatly.’

‘There it is,’ he said, pulling the sixpence out of his pocket and bending it between his teeth. ‘Devil take the man who made it

and the man who gave it me, I say ! I shan't put this splint on again. You don't want it now. Keep your arm in the sling, and be careful of it. If you find it is less comfortable without the splint, we can put it on again. Did you ever see such a d—d bad sixpence in all your life ?

‘ Doctor ; I wish you would tell me the truth about my arm.’

‘ Oh ! it's going on, you know—slowly, but surely. I wager they gave it me at the Crown ; I went in there about dusk and drank a nip of brandy—and filthy bad brandy it was, too.’

‘ It gives me more pain now than it did a fortnight ago.’

‘ That's not an uncommon sign of convalescence. The man's such a fool he'd never remember whether he gave me a sixpence or not ; though, as for that, I was the fool to go in the place—filthy and fiery,

that's what the brandy was. There now, 'tis in two halves !

‘Fling the thing away, Drench, and give me your attention. You don't know how serious this matter is to me.’

He flung the sixpence away with a final curse, and turning to me, crossed his arms, and fixed his eyes on my face. Presently he said :

‘No ; I don't know how serious this matter is, Falkland ; but that's your fault. The most unmanageable cases are those where the patient makes a secret of his sufferings. The poor devil of a doctor has to be guided by his surmises, and minister to the disease he suspects.’

‘Oh ! I assure you, I have hidden none of my physical suffering from you.’

‘That's not enough, in this case, for your body is under the influence of your mind. You are possessed of some secret trouble that's

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more powerful to do harm than my tonics are to do good. You're losing flesh instead of making it—you have no appetite—you eat less than is requisite for the nourishment of your body, and how in the name of ten thousand devils is your arm to heal without fibre and tissue? If your mind were at rest, your arm would heal of itself. Your arm *is* worse than it was a fortnight ago, for you have been losing strength in that time; and it will be worse still, unless you regain what you have lost. 'Tis best you should know this; for 'tis worse than useless to go on pumping congratulations into you that your own feelings show to be false. I have pondered the advisability of telling you the plain fact for some days, and I'm glad 'tis out, since it may provoke you to make an effort in your own behalf. 'Come!' he pursued, after a pause, seeing that his words had in no wise altered my

mood. 'Come! I think I see how it is with you. Some difficulty lies in your path which you know not how to overcome, and therefore you deem it insurmountable. I wager ten to one 'tis half imaginary, for you have fallen into a morbid state, and, like a man with a diseased eye, you can see only a gloomy cloud, though maybe you stand in the brightest sunshine. If you cannot help yourself, why not take my assistance as a last resource? I am not a stranger now! Why not tell me of your moral ailments, since they are most in need of doctoring? I fancy your trouble is not unconnected with that very ring and piece of velvet which were the cause of all this woe, hey?

I told him of my love for Delia, and in conclusion, pointed out how impossible it would be for me to marry her if I could not maintain my independence without rendering her position invidious.

‘I think,’ said he, after hearing me patiently to the end, ‘you’d do very well to leave all these niceties of conduct for consideration when you are married. I see no harm in accepting anything that is given freely ; and for my own part, I do assure you that, if I had the good luck to wed a woman with a fortune, I’d never do another stroke of work as long as I lived, either to satisfy my own conscience or to please my wife. However, we are not all moulded of the same clay ; and I respect your scruples, as I do the Ten Commandments, without professing to be governed by them ; but I can’t, for the life of me, see why you should plague yourself with evils before they come. When you lose your arm ’twill be early enough to wear the willow.’

‘No,’ said I, ‘’tis unfair that I should encourage the girl in loving me, believing that I shall never make her my wife. That

is why I want to know the truth about my arm. If I am to lose it, 'tis my duty to give up all thoughts of marriage, and part from the girl at once and for ever.'

'Ah, very fine indeed!' said he with a grunt; 'and I dare say you think that, after your separation, you would cease to grieve, make flesh, and recover the use of your arm—hey?'

I thought that if I lost Delia it would matter little what befell me after.

'The girl's happiness is of more importance than my arm,' I said.

'It is!' he cried, with an oath; 'and if you value her happiness at a pin's head, you'll clear your mind of these unwholesome pestilent sentimental notions. Of all the strained hypotheses that ever I heard of, this is the most fine-spun, flimsy, and absurd. If you had any strength left in

your poor body, you'd be no more bound by it than by a cobweb. Look you, Falkland, be a man ; and, if you love the girl, give over this maudlin propensity, and rid your mind of contingencies that may never arrive. Say to yourself, " I will save my arm for her sake," and set yourself, heart and soul, to fulfilling the promise ; and, mark me, you'll be fit in a few months to make the child happy, without sacrificing a shred of your mighty fine principle. I'm going down to the Crown for an hour ; and if, when I return, you haven't a love-letter writ for me to carry down to the mail, by George I'll turn my back on you, hunt up the girl, and marry her myself !

With these words, he caught up his hat, and flung out of the room, pulling the door behind him with such a jerk, that he caught his skirt in the latch and tore it half off his coat, an accident which afforded him a sub-

ject for prolific curses upon many subsequent occasions.

I knew my own weakness; and had his guidance been even less wise, I should have accepted it. I felt inspired with new life and courage, and went about to write to Delia with my trembling left hand.

I had sent not a word to her since the letter I wrote at my lodging in London, partly because I had been for some time unable to write at all, and could not dictate my thoughts to another, and partly, in these later days, because I did not feel justified in saying anything which should lead her to think our relative position was unchanged. I did not wish her to know of the accident which had befallen me, because of the pain that knowledge would give her; nor did I wish to grieve her by a seeming neglect. And so I had compounded by sending her little parcels of the wildflowers

I found in my walks, addressing the cover in a print-hand, which I contrived to do fairly well with my left hand and much patience.

Most people, I take it, have at some time suffered prostration by sickness, and know how readily the spirits rise and fall from one extreme to the other in that condition—with what facility the mind abandons itself to despair in one moment, and rises the next into a very heaven of hopes—so I need not here enlarge upon the blissful feelings with which I now penned my letter to Delia. The first half-page was scarcely legible, but as I grew calm my hand ceased to shake; and on a fresh sheet of paper I re-wrote my thoughts—in a scratchy, queer kind of scrawl, to be sure, but in characters not worse than those which some clever folks take pains to produce; and I must own that when I looked at the finished

letter from a distance, I was mightily pleased with my left-handed penmanship. As for the matter of it, I can say nothing, for I do not recollect one word; nor is it necessary that I should, for love-letters, the best of them, are but poor reading for anyone except the person for whom they are writ. Only this, I know, that I said nothing of my wound, or of the doubts and fears that had so recently tormented me.

‘I protest,’ said Drench, looking at the superscription of my letter, ‘not one man in a dozen writes so good a hand with his right as you do with your left.’

This compliment, and my own vanity in this trifling matter, were productive of weighty results.

‘If,’ thought I, springing suddenly up from the chair in which I had been musing—  
‘if I can use my left hand so well in writing,

why should I not use it in modelling? Benoni, after the palsy had taken the vigour from his left side, worked with his right hand alone. Why should not I be a left-handed Benoni? 'Tis but habit makes the right hand defter than the left !'

Having conceived this notion, I was impatient to put my powers to the test. I looked about the house for a piece of wax or any plastic substance ; failing to find it, I went to bed in haste, that I might be up by daybreak to get me some clay. But I could not sleep for revolving over my project, which seemed more and more practicable as I ran over the details in my mind ; and, like the taking fire of the stick in the adage of the old woman with the silver penny, this scheme seemed a solution of all my difficulties—for with the revival of hope, my appetite would return, my strength increase, my right arm grow well, my work improve,

my fortune be assured, and my Delia at length be my wife, to our complete happiness.

At half-past eight the next morning I started out to give my seven pupils at the Squire's their lessons in French, feeling for the first time a hearty dislike to the avocation (an avocation it was, in the true sense of the word), but consoling myself with the reflection that I should be able to begin my work the moment I returned. For since daybreak I had been to Otford, where there is a small pottery, procured a piece of well-kneaded clay, returned with it to my lodgings in a baker's cart, arranged with my landlady for the use of a shed which served as a storehouse for wood in the winter, but which was now fortunately empty, contrived me a modelling-table of an empty barrel, the hoops of a worn sieve, and the lid of a disused copper, set clay convenient to my

hand, with a piece of old linen, a netting mesh, and a knitting-needle, to serve me for tools until I could procure better, and (last, though not least) I had eaten a good breakfast.





## CHAPTER VIII.

FALKLAND BEGINS TO WORK WITH HIS LEFT  
HAND.

**I** GOT to work at half-past three that afternoon, and for a couple of hours I toiled painfully with my left arm, detaching pieces of clay, piling them up on the table, and pressing them into the form I wished my model to take. At the end of that time, as I stooped to get another handful of clay, I was seized with a giddiness, the things before my eyes seemed to be spinning round, and I had to lay hold of the door to keep myself from falling. I was standing thus, my legs trembling under

me, my brain reeling, and the sweat standing in cold drops upon my forehead, when Drench came whistling down the garden.

‘Hulloa, Falkland, what ails you?’ he cried in alarm, catching sight of me.

‘Nothing,’ said I; ‘’tis all over now.’

‘So it seems,’ said he, with a grunt of dissatisfaction.

He took me out into the open air, and set me upon a little bench under an apple-tree; and then he wiped my face with his handkerchief, and made me drink some fresh water, saying never a word until he saw that I was revived.

‘What have you been doing?’ he asked then.

I nodded towards the woodhouse. I was impatient of my weakness, and would have had him a hundred miles away rather than present at this unlucky moment. My work was obvious enough—it was brought close to

the open door for the light—but he was not content with that view ; he walked up to it, looked at the model, then at the lump of clay below, took up a piece in his left hand, weighing it thoughtfully ; then, thrusting his hands in his pockets, he returned to my side whistling.

‘ How long have you been about it ? ’ he asked.

‘ Two hours.’

‘ Haven’t had any help ? ’

‘ Of course not.’

He gravely searched for the rent he had made in his skirt the night before, found it, and examined the stitches with which it had been drawn together.

‘ Damnably darned ! ’ said he, with a jerk of his head. ‘ Thought there was something in the wind when I saw you leave the parson’s. Either you couldn’t or wouldn’t hear me when I halloaed, and I must have

run like a racer to catch up with you at the rate you went. You've gone from one extreme to the other, and I can't tell which will be worse for you. If you think you can digest food with mind and body in a ferment, you know nothing of physiology ; and you know as little of psychology if you think this feverish excitement is to last out four and twenty hours. There'll be a reaction. You'll be down in the dumps, fancy everything is going wrong, and very likely smash your model in despair. I don't know much about art, but it seems to me you have begun a complicated work—some ambitious idea that came into your heated imagination when you ought to have been sleeping, hey ?' He looked at me shrewdly as he put the question. 'Yes, I've hit the truth. Why, a simple cube fashioned in a day would have been enough for a man in your state to achieve with his left hand.'

He whistled a bar or two, ceased whistling to curse the latch on my door, whistled the remaining bars of the tune, and then asked :

‘ Do you think you shall do any good in modelling with your left hand ?’

‘ I am positive of it,’ I replied.

‘ Yes—now. I shouldn’t wonder if you are in the right, notwithstanding your present exaltation. You may do good work with your left hand—after the desponding fit has come and gone, and you begin to work with phlegm. One thing is certain—you can’t teach and model as well. You must give up one or the other. Give up teaching, I should advise. The other stake is better worth playing for, though it be more risksome.’

‘ But my engagements ?’ I said feverishly.

‘ Oh, of course you must begin this modelling without a moment’s delay ! Of

course you can't stay till the term of your engagement is finished before you begin the new thing !

‘ I can't be patient, Drench, at this time. I must be doing.’

‘ Well, I dare say I can manage it for you. The parson don't get on well with his hexameters, he tells me, and will be only too glad to accept any excuse I may offer for your absence. He wants to retire with honour. As for the Squire's family, I'll tell madame that the children's intellects are overstrained, and the anxious mother will give you your congee without entreaties on your side. I'll make that easy.’

‘ You are a rare good fellow, Drench.’

‘ That depends upon circumstances,’ said he ; and added, in a grumbling parenthesis, ‘ I warrant you'll sing a different song to-morrow. If you don't obey my orders, you

will suffer for it. To begin with, you shall do no more work to-day.'

'Nonsense ; I'm strong enough now—there's two hours of daylight left me.'

'So much the better. I've come to take supper with you, and you will be good enough to treat me with hospitality.'

'At any rate, I must cover the clay with a wet cloth.'

'I'll do it ; sit you there, and give your commands.'

He took off his precious coat, that it might not be further injured by contact with the wet clay. Suddenly pausing on his way to the woodhouse, he said :

'I must first of all speak a word with Mrs. Parsons about the diet ; stay where you are.' He put on his coat again and left me. He was gone fully five minutes. When he returned he arranged the cloths as I bade him, and after that we went in to my little

room, where supper was laid on a clean white napkin ; but what astonished me was to find a handsome bouquet of greenhouse flowers and a basket of hot-house grapes set upon the table.

‘Where did these come from ?’ I asked, with sudden emotion.

‘I bought ’em for you,’ he said, without faltering.

I had reason to be moved with gratitude at this testimony of generous friendship ; yet, to tell the truth, the announcement gave me no pleasure, but, on the contrary, made my heart sink. It was such a purely woman-like offering that at first thought I imagined they came from Delia.

Drench took no notice of my want of proper feeling, but set himself to work upon the supper after serving me with such eatables as he considered good for me. He talked now and then of the gardener from

whom he had bought the flowers and fruit, of the parson and his hexameters, of the Squire's family, and ever and anon returned to the subject of his torn coat, and the housekeeper who had darned it. 'Twas a beautiful evening, and as I thought of my work in the wood-house, I bitterly regretted my weakness, which had hindered me from taking advantage of this clear light to make further progress. When the supper was finished the doctor lit a pipe of tobacco. Evidently he would not trust me, and intended to stay with me till the light was gone.

Presently I fell to yawning, and stretching myself, and complained of feeling sleepy ; for I determined that if I couldn't work that evening, I would at least begin early the next morning. Coolly puffing at his pipe, Drench glanced askant at me.

‘If you are tired,’ said he, ‘you can go to bed; but as you’re not likely to go to sleep with the light in your eyes, and your imagination of a turmoil, I’ll stay and read to you.’

I accepted his advice, and went to bed; and as soon as he had smoked out his pipe, he set his back to the window, and taking up the first book to hand, began to read. ’Twas the ‘Paradise Lost’ which he read, and surely I believe there is no man in existence who could have read it worse. He had no notion whatever of dramatic expression, or no ability to render it, and he gave the lines with a horrible see-saw measure, intoned with a nasal twang, after the manner in which a parson’s clerk gives out the first verse of a hymn. And thus he continued without break or rest until I fell asleep, which I imagine I was not long about; for I could neither follow the thoughts of Milton

nor my own, and my brain, growing inactive, speedily yielded to the effects of bodily exhaustion.

In this manner did Dr. Drench obtain his object—preventing me from working, from going abroad for distraction, and finally from entering into conversation with my garrulous old landlady—a good old soul, who, being charged with a secret, was like a child with a penny-piece—not content until she had got rid of it.

I was the first in the house to rise the following morning. I had been working in my shed an hour or so, when my landlady came to me, with the bouquet in one hand and the basket of grapes in the other, and her face full of congratulatory smiles. Knowing what a gossip she was, I was ill-pleased to see her; for my work began to trouble me, and make me irritable with myself.

‘And how do you do, my good sir, this fine bright morning?’ she asked.

‘Much better, thank you.’

‘Well, I’m not surprised, sir, for a friend in need is a friend indeed, as the saying is, and I’m sure you have no reason to complain on that score; which is the reason, sir, as seeing your flowers and your grapes set outside on the shelf where Dr. Drench put ’em afore going last night, I made bold to bring ’em, thinking as you might like to take a glance at ’em nows and thens, to put you in mind of some one who is the *best* of friends, I warrant.’

‘Very kind of you to think of me, Mrs. Parsons, but I’ll beg you to take them into my room. There’s no place for them here, and I am so occupied with my work that I don’t wish to look at anything else—or talk of anything else.’

The good woman, checked in the very

outset, replied, with a toss of her head, that she had no wish to intrude, and whisked off with the flowers and fruit in high dudgeon ; and came only once again, about an hour later, to tell me briefly that my breakfast was served.





## CHAPTER IX.

### A HELPMATE.

**D**RENCH'S prophecy was realized. The reaction came. When, after three hours' work, I looked at what I had done, and compared the result with my anticipations, I was so mortified by my failure, and overcome with despair, that I threw down the tool from my unskilful hand, laid my arm on the table, and dropping my head upon it, burst into tears.

I am ashamed, as I recall this weakness—which was indeed nothing but the result of physical prostration—and would willingly

omit it, with many other faults and failings not necessary to mention here, were it not that in recording this childishness on my part I have an opportunity of revealing the womanliness of my Delia.

As I stood there, sobbing, my eyes pressed against my arm, thinking that I was worse than a fool to have written to Delia, whom now I must give up for ever, that dear creature came unseen and unheard to my side, and found me in my abject state.

‘George,’ said she tenderly, and she laid her hand upon my shoulder.

My heart leapt up at the sound of that sweet young voice. I dashed the tears from my eyes—I beheld my beautiful darling standing there. I laughed, I caught her to me, clasping her convulsively with my single arm, whilst between my kisses my lips poured forth a stream of incoherent words of love and endearment. Thus did I

behave then, who but a moment before had bitterly reproached myself with encouraging her love by a letter, and resolved that we must part for ever.

Suddenly a pang shot through my right arm, causing me to wince.

‘Oh, I have hurt your arm!’ cried Delia, tearing herself from my embrace.

‘’Twas no fault of yours, dear: ’tis past; ’twas nothing to what I suffer now, seeing my Delia grieved. Come, let us sit down in the shade.’

I took her by the hand, and we sat down side by side on the little bench under the apple tree.

‘I meant to be so careful!’ she murmured in a tone of self-reproach.

‘Why, how were you to know that—that I had given my arm a bit of a sprain yesterday?’

‘I know all that has happened. I know how you were wounded, and why, my

darling. 'Twas for the sake of the ring I gave you.'

'Who told you this?'

'Papa learnt it at the inn last night. But I knew some ill had befallen you when I saw your letter; I suspected it before, when you expressed your dear love for me in flowers. I wanted to come to you, dear; I wanted to write; but I could learn nothing concerning you, and there was no address sent with the flowers. Let me kiss you for them, darling. I do think I know every one of them separately, and could tell you the thoughts that were in your mind as you plucked them; and then, dear, I would have started off with papa to find you, for you told me in your first letter that 'twas to Sevenoaks you were going, but I thought I would wait till you bade me come, and I did wait till your letter came yesterday morning, and then

I could wait no longer. We were sitting down to lunch, dear, but the moment papa saw what I wanted he rose, and himself fetched a post-chaise, and I came away without changing my gown—see—just as I was.’

I knew very little about fashions, but it struck me I had never seen her dressed so simply; yet this made no difference to her looks, for, simple or splendid, her clothes were alike becoming to her. I told her so, and she was pleased; for she had her due share of vanity, and was the more lovable for it.

‘But surely,’ said I, ‘unless an accident befell you by the way, you must have arrived at Sevenoaks before dusk last evening.’

‘Yes; we were very close to you at five o’clock; we were just coming to you through the cottage, when your doctor stopped us, telling us that your recovery

depended upon the tranquillity of your mind, and begging us to wait in the house until he had seen whether you were in a fit state to support excitement. He left us for a little while, and, coming back, said you had over-fatigued yourself, and ought to recover your strength before seeing anyone. So we went away very sad and anxious, as you may think, dear, after obtaining the doctor's promise to let us know how you were later in the evening. He came to us about eight, and said, in his droll, pompous manner, "We are sleeping very peacefully, and after a good night's rest we shall be quite strong enough to see our friends," and he told us that after your excitement of yesterday a reaction would set in, and you would very likely need such<sup>e</sup> encouragement as a beloved friend only could give; and it was so. I think he must be very clever, dear.'

‘Oh, he’s too clever by half!’ I cried angrily, thinking how he had deprived me of my Delia; ‘and the flowers and fruit, my love?’

‘He said he would give them to you as from another friend.’

‘At the moment I saw them, I believed ’twas your dear hand that brought ’em; but he told me a falsehood, and I couldn’t bear to look at ’em then.’

‘What! you didn’t care for them when you were told they came from another?’ she cried, clapping her hands, and looking eagerly into my face.

‘I wouldn’t have ’em nigh me.’

‘Oh, I am so glad!’ she cried; and then she laid her cheek upon my shoulder and her lips parted in a kiss.

I did not suffer her to waste her kisses so. We spoke scarcely a word for five minutes or more. She threw her straw bonnet upon

the grass, and there seemed a little glory to surround her head as the light shone upon the silky sunny locks. Had she been indeed an angel from Heaven, her presence could not have filled my soul with deeper ecstasy. Her head rested against my shoulder, her face was turned up towards mine. She looked anxious, there was a little tremulous movement in her lips, as though 'twere the curved petal of a rose yielding to her breath; her large innocent sweet eyes were full of grave solicitude, the lashes were wet with a tear that had fallen.

‘Your dear face is thin and pale,’ she said mournfully.

‘’Tis six weeks that we have been parted,’ said I.

‘Six weeks of suffering for you, dear—cruel pain and bitter disappointment, my darling, I know. But you will master every difficulty, for you are a great brave man, and

will soon regain all your lost vigour. And you will be successful and prosperous. All that you hoped for will come—'tis but a delay. You and I can never marry any-one but me and you. 'Tis not as though time could lessen our love and estrange us. I do love you now more than ever I did.'

'You dear soul !'

'And the day will come when we shall be married, and nothing more shall disturb our peace. You do not fear that I shall cease to love you ?'

'No—no—no. But how long must we wait ?' said I, with a touch of my old despondency. 'When I left London, the day seemed so near. I said to myself that in all probability I should be established and able to make you my wife in a year—only a year, my love !—think of it, 'tis but a few months—'twere nothing to wait a year.

But alas ! now, I know not how far distant the day may be.'

'And was it only the belief that you could not wed me in a year that made you unhappy ?' she asked, with a little smile of triumph as she raised her head to look me more fully in the face.

''Twas that, indeed,' said I.

'Then grieve no more, sweet,' she cried ;  
'we will be married in a year.'

I could not speak for admiring her noble face—for now 'twas more than pretty—and I sat in silence, looking at her, for a minute or two ; then, the recollection of my position coming upon me :

'Do you know that I may have to teach languages to keep from being your pensioner ?' I asked.

'Yes, I have thought of that. Papa learnt that you had been earning your living by teaching, and I said to him, " If

the worst befalls us, George can still teach when we are married.” ’

‘ What will the world say,’ I asked, laughing, ‘ to see me going out to my pupils in the morning, and leaving my wife alone in her fine house ?’

‘ You are not afraid of the world, George ?’ she asked.

‘ That for the world !’ said I, with a snap of my fingers.

‘ Aye,’ said she, ‘ and less than that. So that you find no fault in me, I care nothing for the opinion of others. *You* are all the world to me, dear.’

‘ But——’

She interrupted me.

‘ If you teach, I shall teach also,’ said she. ‘ If you go out in the morning to your pupils, I shall go out also to mine. I have been thinking very gravely of what you said to me, George, and I know that there

can be no love between a man and his wife unless they are equal. A man must never sacrifice his feeling of independence. And so, love, if you are poor, I will be poor as well. I am ready to marry you when you will have me, and to give up everything for you. If you can work, so can I; and oh! what happiness 'twill be to put the fruits of our labour together for our common use, helping each other alike in little matters and great.'

My emotion seemed to choke me. I wanted to speak, but could not.

'Do you think I am a child still, George?' she asked.

'I think you are the noblest woman that ever lived,' I said.

'Then 'tis your love hath made me so,' said she. 'I have changed to my own astonishment in these last weeks. I see life and myself with other eyes. This ring

has brought me wisdom.' She held up her hand to show me the ring I had given her, and kissed the pledge of my love. 'I see now where a woman's life begins—where all her happiness is.' She took my arm, and pressed it to her breast. 'You will believe, dear, that it is not girlish fickleness that leads me so readily to renounce the mode of life I had chose before I knew you. 'Tis because I know and love you that I can find no charm in the society that pleased me once.'

I recalled to mind what Mr. Adams had predicted, which now seemed realized.

'But you have not ceased to love beautiful things?' I said.

'No. I think I love them more by loving you.'

'But are you prepared to relinquish them in marrying a poor teacher?'

'Yes, till we acquire more. There are

beautiful things in nature that the poorest may enjoy, and you will find time and ability to make some work of art for our home.'

'And could you be content to live under a thatch like that?' I asked, pointing to the cottage.

'Till we could afford a better, and then I dare say I should grow critical. But not till then. But we are thinking of the worst that may happen. You may recover the use of your dear arm.'

'I *will*!' cried I. 'I know that I shall use it again.'

'Then, knowing that, why were you so troubled when I found you at your work?'

'I was weak and despondent. I thought 'twould be my duty to send you back your ring and release you from your engagement.'

‘Release me!’ she cried, laughing. ‘Do you think I would be as great a goose as you, and give you your release in return?’

‘I am ashamed of my weakness. I was mortified by my failure.’

‘Show me what it was you failed to do,’ said she, rising.

I took her into the house, and showed her what I had begun.

‘’Tis a figure seated. Tell me about it,’ said Delia.

My notion was to break through the conventional rules of sculpture, and make a statue which should appeal to the heart rather than the intellect; and for this purpose I had resolved to take for my model the husband of the good woman whose cottage I lived in. This poor old fellow had been blind for many years, and ’twas his custom to sit in his windsor chair outside of

his house, where he could feel the warmth of the sun and employ his remaining faculties in observation. He was chatty and cheerful, fond of a joke, but fonder still of showing how much he knew despite the loss of his eyesight. He recognised acquaintances readily by their footsteps, and would speak to them as they passed, addressing them by name, to bid them good-day and let off some fact acquired during the morning—the thrush had taken her brood from the quick-set, or the sparrows were building again in the eaves, or the hay was dry enough to carry in the bottom meadow, or the honeysuckle was blooming, or some other such thing was doing. When he was alone, he would take off his hat and spread out his hands, as if to take in the rays of the sun; and a most pathetic expression of *waiting* dwelt upon his face at these times, as though he foresaw that the day was not far

distant when he should again have the beauties of the universe revealed to his sight. He realized to my mind the figure in Mr. Thomas Gray's elegy of a 'mute inglorious Milton.'

I explained my idea to Delia. She listened attentively, but, seemingly perplexed with some difficulty in the way, she asked timidly :

'Will the figure be nude, dear, or in a Roman dress ?'

'Neither,' said I ; 'the heroism of to-day is not the heroism of the ancients ; our ideas, if less splendid, are more humane ; and if we English of the eighteenth century are to be great in art, we must work with our own feelings, and not borrow the sympathies of a people that is dead and gone. My hero, patiently enduring affliction, and hopefully trusting in the Divine beneficence, shall be as I see him in his simple country

dress and homely attitude—the worthy outcome of this better age.’

Delia regarded me with wrapt eyes, in which swelled a tear of love and admiration. She seemed to catch my enthusiasm; but ’twas love that magnified me in her esteem, and I believe that had I talked the greatest nonsense in the world, she would have taken it for wisdom that passed her understanding.

‘Oh! that is great and generous!’ she cried. ‘No one but my George could form such a conception. Show me,’ she added, turning to my model, ‘what it was that discouraged you, for I can see nothing that is not admirable—the posture is full of grace and pathos. I see already how ’twill look.’

Looking at my work with revived courage, I saw that I really had hit a happy attitude, and that I had vastly underrated my

achievement, considering the short length of time I had given to it.

‘Twas the difficulty of working at the details, dear, that made me lose heart. I think I lost my little stock of patience in thinking of the long and tedious days that must be spent upon the minor points before the whole would be completed.’

‘The folds of the clothes and such like matters.’

‘Yes.’

‘That is merely the faithful copying of a model.’

‘Just so ; but it is that which would weary and dishearten me.’

‘George, dear, will you let me do that ?’

‘You, Delia !’ I exclaimed.

‘Yes. I could not invent—I would not like to touch the hands, or any part of the head ; but I can copy faithfully, and I will put the drapery upon the body and limbs

when you have defined the outline, and I will work patiently under your guidance, and be like a tool in your own hand if you will only let me help you.'

'But you have never learnt to model.'

'Yes, I have, dear. For six weeks I have done nothing else. For the night you told me I should be your wife, I said to myself, "I must learn to be a help to my husband," and I have taken lessons, dear, and—and—I think you will find me useful to you, dear.'

'My wife!—my love!'

The click of the latch in the cottage door startled us, and put an end to the silent transport with which I clasped my darling to me after this fresh evidence of her vast love; and Mrs. Parsons came towards us with a mincing step, her hands folded one over the other, and her eyes bent modestly on the ground. She coughed to warn us

of her coming, having doubtless apprised herself from her observatory in the pantry of all that was passing in the wood-house. She came to a stand with a respectful but a motherly smile.

‘I’ve laid your breakfast, Mr. Falkland, sir, in the kitchen,’ said she; ‘and I’ve a-made so bold as to lay a extry bowl in case the young lady might like to stay and take a bit with you in our country fashion.’

Delia looked at me, and clasping her hands, said :

‘Oh ! I should like that beyond everything ; but——’ her face grew suddenly grave, and then broke into a merry smile. ‘Papa’s waiting outside. I forgot all about him.’

‘He is in the lane, and has been waiting all this time for you ?’

‘Yes. He knew that I wanted to see you alone,’ Delia said, dropping her voice,

and pinching my hand that hung near hers.

‘If ’tis the gentleman in the silk stockings, miss,’ said Mrs. Parsons, ‘he’s a-walking with my good man in the front garden, and a-talking about bees and carrots; I’ll go fetch him at once, and if he’s of the same mind as your ladyship, ’tis but to put another pint of new milk in the pipkin, for there’s butter a plenty, and a new loaf of my own baking, though I says it as shouldn’t, that’s enough for all.’

She went before; and Delia, with a little fluttering sigh of happiness, took my arm, and we followed.

The kitchen was as clean as hands could make it. The little windows, with their many-tinged panes of glass, screened by white dimity curtains, looped up neatly with sample-stitched bands, and the widespreading fuchsias, let in but little light; but

the door was set wide open, and the sunlight streamed in, showing the quaint staircase that led up to my room, the tall old clock, the highly coloured Christmas-carol in its frame, decorated with fir cones; the snowy dresser, with its rows of brightly shining plates and its tea-board painted with a view of Mount Vesuvius, and all the objects on that side of the room, while the rest lay in an agreeable shade. There was a pleasant smell of boiled milk; the table, covered with a spotless cloth, well pressed, was set with two white bowls, a pat of primrose-coloured butter, and a mountainous well-baked loaf of bread.

Delia looked round the room, and then at the preparation for our breakfast, and then up at me, her bright eyes twinkling and her cheeks flushing. She pressed my arm closer, and, standing on tiptoe, whispered :

‘ I feel as though we were already married, dear !’



## CHAPTER X.

### DELIA'S DEVOTION.

**I** HAVE heard it maintained that to the resolute nothing is impracticable; and my Delia proved the truth of this assertion, and her own firm purpose, by carrying out her project in spite of all the difficulties which opposed it. I know that not one girl in ten thousand could do what she did; but I know also that not one in ten thousand or ten hundred thousand could love as she loved.

She would not return to London; she would not leave me again for a day; she

insisted upon beginning at once, and she would accept no compromise.

‘I *can’t* understand it,’ said Honest Davie, laying a long stress on the ‘*can’t*’—  
‘I *can’t* understand it anyhow. I don’t hold out for Park Lane, seeing that Mr. Falkland is more likely to get strong in a short time in the country; but what’s the matter with Adams’s Hall? We arranged, Delia and me, to shut up the London house and go there in a fortnight, and everything will be nice and comfortable by that time. A lot of friends have promised to come and stay with me, and we shall be as gay as crickets. In the meantime, we could go to Bath or Cheltenham or Tunbridge, or any place where the water’s nasty, and that ought to suit your taste, Mr. Falkland.’

‘I can’t afford to take a long holiday,’ said I.

‘Well, say a week—that’s not long; and

I wager by that time I'll have everything ready at the Hall.'

'We are going to work here, papa. I can sleep at the inn until the Hall is ready, and then I shall drive over every morning and go back at night when we can't see to work any longer.' Her eyes sparkled with pleasant anticipation.

'I *can't* understand it,' reiterated Davie slowly, as he looked round the little wood-house. 'This shed is a good sort of a shed for gardening tools and pots and barrows and such like ; but I don't see why you can't make your images just as well in that big front-room at Adams's Hall. You could have servants to clean up the mess after you, and do just as you like. Choose your own set of rooms, Mr. Falkland ; order what you please for dinner ; have whatever friends you choose to see you—the more the merrier ; rise when you

like, lie down when you feel a bit tired ; go out for a stroll, or a game of bowls, when you want a change. 'Tis your old home, sir ; you'll feel at your ease, no one will trouble you. It don't sound uncomfortable, do it ?

‘ No ; but a little too comfortable,’ said I.

‘ Not a bit, sir, asking your pardon for the contradiction. 'Tis much easier to stick to a thing when it's agreeable than to hang on to it when it's going contrary. 'Tis like horse-riding,’ he added, after a moment's reflection. ‘ While the animal goes along smooth and even you feel as if you could stop on him for a month ; but when a butcher's boy gives him a cut, and he takes to walking about on his hind-legs, and then lifting them up in the air, you feel grateful when he pitches you off and leaves you in the middle of the road. 'Tisn't a bad shed,’

he repeated, casting another critical glance around, 'but a blustering east wind would blow smack in through that door, and maybe the next time there comes a smart shower you'll find the water coming through the thatch. I don't say this to put you out of heart, Delia, my dear. God forbid! This notion of helping your husband is a fine notion—one of the finest you've ever had; and just for that reason I should be sorry if the disagreeables of working in a shed should lead you to give it up.'

'I shall not give it up,' said Delia quietly. 'Tis not at all like any other notion I have had, and I beg you to let me have my own way.'

'I never thwarted you in anything, dear, and I shan't begin now,' said Davie; and he said no more at that time.

I might have yielded at once to these persuasions had Delia supported them, for

I was no less fearful than Davie lest she should be discouraged by the inconveniences he hinted at; but she seemed to see this, and grew firmer than ever.

‘We will begin, dear, as we may have to go on,’ she said to me. ‘When we can afford to have a fine study of our own, we will have one.’

I think she wished to show me that she could bear hardships—that her devotion to art and to me was not a mere whim, which owed its charm to novelty, and that she was something more than a pretty girl with a romantic disposition. I know she was delighted when the prognosticated smart shower came on the third day of our joint labours, and a drop of water fell plump on her work, obliging her to shift it to another place. After the rain came the east wind, sweeping down the pungent smoke from a neighbouring bonfire into

our rude study. Then Drench, paying us a visit, clumsily stuck his elbow against Delia's model, obliterating the successful work of a day. But these misfortunes only animated her with new zeal. She said nothing, but her glance seemed to say: 'You see that I am in earnest, and that I am brave.'

When Davie found that he could not dissuade Delia from her purpose, he did his best to aid her in it. He started for London as soon as the discussion was ended with a list of the things she required, and returned with them in the evening, when, looking at the work Delia had done in his absence, he lifted up his hands in admiration, and expressed his astonishment in many disjointed exclamations, such as 'Ad's my life!' 'Hearts o' me!' 'Good o' gracious!' and the like; though at that early stage there was nothing for an un-

trained eye to admire, and I fancy he would have been sorely puzzled to tell what the figure was meant to represent.

I had made up a table for Delia, and we worked upon separate models. Mine was necessarily rough, for 'twas only with painful effort I could put finish upon my work. I aimed mainly at giving a correct anatomical outline and a suitable expression to the figure, and in this I succeeded slowly, but fairly well. Delia, with remarkable swiftness and fidelity, copied my work, seizing my intention at once, and rendering it with extreme delicacy and precision. Her nimble fingers kept pace with mine, albeit they had to perform a dozen times the amount of labour in manipulating the details which my work merely suggested.

I was not less astonished than delighted with her ability, which became more evident as the nervousness with which she began

what was to her the most important attempt of her life wore off, and she worked with greater freedom ; and it needed all my self-control to refrain from expressing my admiration. The joy I felt in her success took such hold upon me, that I would sometimes work for half an hour or so in a futile way, not knowing what I did. 'Twas hard, indeed, to keep my eyes away from her dainty person, and that lovely face which looked lovelier still for its expression of noble ardour, but harder still to distract my thoughts from her devotion to me. Happily for the progress of our work, her earnest mind was too absorbed in study to partake of my inquietude.

No one would have guessed that we were lovers, who for the first time saw us modelling there. We worked in perfect silence, save when a necessary question was to be asked and answered, and then we spoke in

brief sentences, and with the cold dry tone of teacher and pupil.

When I looked at her work, she watched my face eagerly to catch my opinion, for I abstained as much as I could from praising her. Praise did her more harm than good—it intoxicated her, and unfitted her for steady work. 'Tis to most of us like wine—a little is good, but in excess 'tis pernicious, and I truly believe that art suffers ten times more by praise than by neglect. In this case 'twas particularly dangerous, for generally it was accompanied with some expression of tenderness that took our thoughts from our work to ourselves, and made it difficult to separate and fix them again upon our work.

I remember—'twas the third day, and old Mr. Parsons was sitting to us—she asked me to see if her treatment of the old man's coat-sleeve was right. I was

so struck with admiration at what I saw that I lost my customary reserve.

‘ ’Tis astonishing !’ I said, bending over the model.

‘ Astonishing ! have I made some stupid blunder ?’ she asked, in alarm.

‘ No !’ said I, ‘ ’tis the perfection of your hand that astonishes me.’

‘ ’Tis your hand, my darling !’ she cried, and then down went the tool, and she flung her arms about my neck, and we did no more work for half an hour. After this break we worked on steadily for an hour, and then she called me again to look at her work.

‘ That is nearer perfection, I think,’ said she.

I laughed at first to see how she had been working up the folds I had praised, and then I felt sorry, for she had ruined a piece of fine bold work by excessive elaboration.

I told her the fault she had made, and pointed out that the art of a sculptor, or a painter, or a writer, lies not in producing every detail that meets the eye, but in making a judicious selection of those which are fittest to illustrate the leading idea.

‘Thank you, dear,’ she said, when I had finished, and without another word, she pressed out the faulty work, and set herself to remodel it; and so an afternoon was lost, for the remainder was spent in restoring the original folds, which, however, she failed to do to her satisfaction.

After that, if there was any comment to make, ’twas reserved until the work of the day was finished.

We had our good days and our bad days. When they were good we rejoiced, when they were bad we consoled ourselves with hopes of a better to-morrow; but there was

no day which was not fraught with happiness.

At the end of ten days, the model was so near completion, that we began to discuss the ways and means of making the copy, which was to be of life-size. One thing was clear—either the wood-shed must be greatly altered, or we must find another and fitter place to work in.

Davie took advantage of this opportunity to renew his arguments in favour of our working at Adams's Hall, and in a very original and characteristic manner.

‘Look here, Mr. Falkland, sir,’ said he, taking me aside after we had been casting about for a method of enlarging the shed without running the risk of bringing the whole structure down on our heads. ‘I am beginning to see the working of this pride which has puzzled me so long. The more unpleasant a thing is, the more pleasure you

feel in sticking to it. It *ain't* like horse-riding ; though maybe horse-riding would have the same charms for me if I had any pride in me. Now, I want you to be reasonable and be guided by your own principles. You've had rain and you've had wind, and you've had enough smoke from that bonfire to p'isen you ; and if you insist upon staying and working in that wood-shed, Delia will have to spend six hours a-day in coming to and fro between this and Adams's Hall ; and one fine day, the likelihood is, that if you take the side out of the shed, as you propose, the whole thing will come down with a run, destroying at one go this piece of work you build all your hopes on, and ten chances to one maiming you or Delia into the bargain. Now, I ask you, sir, if all these discomforts are outweighed by the unpleasantness of working at Adams's Hall ; because if they are, you ought, accord-

ing to your own principles, to prefer the latter.'

I laughed at his sophistry ; but Davie's lugubrious visage was unaltered.

' 'Tis no laughing matter, sir, for me,' said he, 'and if you will not do this thing for your own sake, I beg you to do it for mine. For if you refuse to accept any help, 'twill be said that you scorn to touch my money because 'twas dishonestly come by.'

'But I do not believe that 'twas dishonestly come by.'

He glanced at the shed where Delia was still at work, and drawing me a little further away, said :

'I know that you have faith in my honesty, but there are others who have not.'

'You mean my uncle, Lord Kestral.'

He nodded his head.

'What does it matter what he thinks ?' I asked.

‘It matters a good deal what he says and leads others to think.’

‘But you can prove your innocence,’ I said.

He was silent for a minute, and then he said quietly :

‘No, I can’t.’

I became silent in my turn. I did not for a moment think that I had been deceived by his simplicity, that he was a thief, that he had misappropriated Mr. Bond’s fortune. I thought that, trusting in Mrs. Bond’s promise to become his wife, he had destroyed the will that could bring her to shame. I waited, expecting he would make some sort of explanation of the circumstances to me.

‘I can’t even prove it to you,’ he said, as if he saw and wished to set at rest my expectation.

‘Well,’ said I, after a pause, ‘after all,

what does it matter what Lord Kestral says, or his friends think? Your true friends will always believe in you. Delia no longer cares for the society you entered for her sake, and I feel sure that you care still less for these fine personages. Why should you not shut your door against them and live in the mode that better pleases you? You were happier at Cheshunt.'

'I can't go back to Cheshunt. Why, sir, 'twould be said that I was a designing knave, who has assumed a position with my ill-gotten riches to marry my daughter into a good family, whose name would shield my conduct from inquiry.'

Again I asked what it mattered whether the world's opinion was good or bad.

'It matters a vast deal more than you think, sir,' said he; 'here comes Delia. Her happiness and mine are at stake. I beg you to agree to my request.'

He spoke hurriedly and earnestly. It seemed to me that Delia would never comply with his desire.

‘What are you talking about with such gravity?’ asked Delia, coming to us.

‘Talking about the inconveniences of working here,’ said I. ‘I want to finish our work at the Hall.’

‘Then we’ll go there, dear,’ said she, as cheerfully as though it had never been in her mind to object. Indeed, had I asked her to start that moment for the world’s end, I believe she would have complied as readily.





## CHAPTER XI.

### THE BEGINNING OF DAVIE'S DIFFICULTIES.

**D**RENCH came in to see me soon after this arrangement was decided, and I told him of my intention, for I had contracted a strong affection for the eccentric doctor, and made no concealment of my affairs from him. He laughed heartily at this turn in my disposition.

‘A week ago,’ said he, ‘you’d have forbidden me to speak to you again if I had suggested the possibility of your doing such a thing; and have tortured yourself with

I know not how many poignant scruples at the very thought of it. Well, a man who hasn't common health, can't be expected to have common sense. Thank God! your morbid sentimentality is going; 'tis a sure sign that your strength is returning. You may do what you please with your arm now; I can be of no further use to you. Not that I intend to leave you on that account. I shall constitute myself family doctor to Mr. Adams.' He looked at me with a roguish twinkle in his eye, and after chuckling at his own unspoken thoughts, he continued: 'I wager I shall be called for within eighteen months, Falkland.'

'So be it,' said I curtly, not relishing his pleasantry.

'Aye; but you needn't look as if you didn't mean it. Confound this excessive delicacy, which must stop a man's mouth from wishing his friend the greatest joy he

can have. You'll be married before Christmas, or I'm a Dutchman and you're not flesh and blood. As for your scruples, you'll get better of them as you get better of your wound, by being in the company of Miss Adams. Your healthy man, Falkland, has barely enough principle to keep him out of gaol; look at the gipsy. Brigands, in general, are remarkable for robust constitutions. I have never suffered a day's illness, and I've no more sentiment than a tom-cat. The only remorse I have suffered has been caused by that poisonous brandy at the Lion. I shall come and see you frequently at Adams's Hall, and Adams shall pay for my visits.'

In the evening Delia and I, with Davie, drove to Maplehurst in an open coach, and I think I never in my life did so enjoy a drive. Our road lay between high, sandy banks, dressed with tufts of huckle and

purple heath and trailing brambles, and over our heads the larches made a delicate canopy; and then we came upon trim orchards, where red apples bore down the branches with their weight, and cows grazing in the shade turned their sleepy eyes to watch us pass, and upon hop-gardens all festooned with the gracefully twining vines; and we passed over a stretch of common-land, ragged with furze and brake and broom; and then a village green, with its pond and flock of grey geese busily nibbling the short grass, and its ale-house, where the yeomen and smocked peasants sat smoking their clay pipes in serious silence; and wound through pleasant avenues of elms, with wide-spreading fields of corn on either hand; and then by the side of a hill, thickly wooded with dark oak and darker firs, stretching downwards to a valley threaded with a stream, and

verdured with grass of the tenderest green; and so on to the brow of the hill, where the vast Weald of Kent lay spread out before us, looking like an interminable and desert forest, but for here and there a little haze of blue smoke, a church spire, or the red cowl of a hop-kiln, which showed that the homes of men were there.

‘Sure, ’tis the sweetest country in the world,’ said Delia.

‘Aye, and this is the sweetest time to see it, love,’ I whispered, touching her hand.

‘You’ll be married before Christmas, or I’m a Dutchman and you’re not flesh and blood.’ Those absurd words of Drench’s kept returning to my mind, like the remembrance of a melody which one may try in vain to get rid of; and though I said to myself that the notion was preposterous to think of at such a time as this, when I was actually without means of independent

subsistence, yet, nevertheless, it gave me a certain measure of delight, so the country and my Delia looked most charming when the thought was running through my head.

Honest Davie was particularly anxious that I should approve of the alterations that had been made in the Hall, seeming to regard me as the absolute owner of the house, and himself merely as a steward responsible for its well-being.

‘I’ve carried out your suggestions, sir,’ said he, ‘according to my lights, and I hope there’s nothing to laugh at. With regard to the outside, I would let the architect go no further than the steps, the balustrade and the founting, all of which, he tells me, are in keeping with the style of the house. The garden I think I may say I have improved, and the bowling-green is as nigh perfection as two men and a boy

with a roller can bring it. As to the inside of the house, that's pretty much as you saw it last ; for nothing much has been done in it save a mort of scrubbing and scouring, and polishing and furbishing up generally. All the old picters and furniture is just where it was, and I've only made bold to bring down a few cart-loads of gimcracks that Delia cottons to ; they can all go back to-morrow if she thinks fit. I don't say, my dear,' he added, turning to her, 'but what the whole thing would have been better done if you had been about, to say what was right and what was wrong ; but, you see, you was otherwise employed, and I had no one to consult except Miss Dobson, who has had her hands full of servants and linen and such like.'

'I fear I am prodigious selfish,' cried Delia, hanging her head ; then suddenly raising it and looking at her father, she

caught up his hand and kissed it, crying, 'Oh, you are a dear, loving, good father. Think, George,' turning to me, 'he has been posting from Sevenoaks hither, hither to London, and thence to Sevenoaks, a dozen times in the last week, thinking of me and of you, and how he could gratify our tastes and wishes, suffering all sorts of inconvenience and discomfort, quite neglected and uncared-for by me, while we have been working in continual happiness and thinking only of ourselves.'

'A fiddlestick's end for my merit!' cried Davie. 'I warrant you I should have done nothing of the sort if it hadn't given me pleasure to do it. There, what think ye of that bowling-green, Mr. Falkland?'

'Tis as smooth as a sheet of new velvet!' said I, looking at the greensward with its closely clipped yew-hedge, which we were

at that moment passing ; ‘ and I hope before long to play you a game on it.’

‘ Aye, sir, aye ; all in good time.’

The footboy had run on in advance to announce our coming, and at the north door Miss Dobson came to meet us with a courtesy, while the servants assembled in the hall to receive their young mistress.

We passed through the hall, and so by the east door on to the terrace ; for Delia was impatient to see the improvements that had been made. Nor were we slow to express our delight, for, in addition to the marble, properly toned to harmonize with the weather-stained façade of the house, which lent elegance and a certain degree of grandeur to the fine expanse of well-shaven lawn, there were flowers of every tint in profusion, planted along the side beds, upon the terrace, and in the handsome vases along the balustrade. And to hear our

genuine praise, Davie rubbed his hands in glee.

‘I must wear silk and satin and velvet, and a hat with a broad brim and a long ostrich feather, to be in keeping with this beautiful scene,’ said Delia; then, turning to me, she added, ‘when we have made our fortunes, dear, and can afford to live in such style.’

It pleased me to find that my sweetheart’s resolution was not shaken by temptation; for I own that my mind misgave me when I saw her delight in the midst of these fine surroundings, and noticed how her eyes sparkled at the thought of the silks and satins in which she should so becomingly be dressed.

Davie would have had us take the best and largest room in the house for our work; but this we declined, and gave our preference to an outhouse where we could work

in greater seclusion ; for we had no wish to make a show of our undertaking, or to provide a subject for the surmises and speculations of people who would not be able to understand or justly appreciate our motives.

After supper, Delia and I left Davie to read his letters, of which a bagfull awaited his attention, and spent a most delightful hour in walking upon the terrace, where we discoursed upon love and happiness, matter which loses its charm in being writ. Miss Dobson took her away from me, saying the night was chill ; and indeed, as I kissed my darling's cheek, bidding her good-night, it was cool and like a rose in the morning.

I walked for some time longer on the terrace, thinking of Delia. The moon was rising over the trees : its lower half was yet partly hidden by the foliage. I stopped,

asking myself if anything in this lovely night was so lovely as my dear. The spray from the fountain, sparkling in the moonlight, was not so lustrous as her eyes ; the fall of the waters was not so musical as her voice ; the perfume of the flowers not so sweet as her breath—these things could not compare with her. I had not seen their beauty when she was by ; and all the charms they now had in my eyes they owed to her, like water by night which does but faintly reflect the glories of the heavens.

‘What are you looking at, George, dear?’

’Twas my Delia who spoke from a window above.

I told her my thoughts. She listened to the end ; and then, with a little dove-like cry of delight, she tore a cluster of roses from the casement-side, pressed them to her lips again and again, and threw them down to me.

When I entered the house, I found Davie with two piles of opened letters before him, and a folded letter in his hand, with which he was thoughtfully scraping his long jaw.

‘Don’t let me interrupt you,’ said I, as he rose to meet me, laying down the letter.

‘As for that, sir,’ said he, ‘I shall be only too glad to have half-an-hour’s rest, if you will give me the excuse for taking it.’

‘You have plenty of work before you, if you intend answering all these letters,’ said I, sitting down by the table.

‘They’ll keep me going best part of the night, I warrant. Letters seem to me like weeds in a garden: if you don’t get rid of ’em at once, there’s no getting rid of ’em at all. That lot’s from people I don’t know,’ he pointed to the larger heap. ‘People in misfortune—widows and orphans, poor

souls ! tradesmen on the brink of ruin, and poets on the verge of insanity. A trifle of money and a couple of words, that's all they want. 'Tis the easiest part of my work.'

‘And the pleasantest, I should think.’

‘Yes, sir. Miss Dobson don't have to look over the answers to them to see if the spelling's right ; and there's no fear of the letters being handed about for a laughing-stock. This is the lot that breaks my heart,’ he brought his fist down on the lesser pile ; ‘letters about nothing, that have to be answered in the same spirit. It's like watering plants with a leaky pot. You don't do what you want to do, and you make yourself in a mess. There's not a word I write to these people but what will be looked at through a dozen eye-glasses and made fun of. I begin to know my friends.’

‘I shouldn't answer their letters.’

‘Asking your pardon, Mr. Falkland, I think you would, sir; for I take it, you wouldn't put yourself on a level with them, even in such a trifle as want of civility.’

‘Are they all equally bad?’

‘Why, no, sir; some are a trifle worse. There's one or two that bother me terrible.’

‘Can I help you?’

‘I wish you would, sir. Your judgment is just what I need.’

‘You shall have it and welcome.’

He thanked me heartily, and drawing his chair up to the table briskly, unfolded the letter he had before him.

‘Do you know Mr. Randle Bond, sir?’ he asked; ‘your uncle's step-son?’

‘I have not even seen him.’

Davie took to stroking his cheek again

reflectively with the letter, and said slowly :

‘ He is not a nice young man, Mr. Falkland—not the sort of young man you would like to have for your son, nor for a friend, nor even for an acquaintance. ’Tis not his own fault, maybe, but the fault of those whose duty it was to bring him up carefully, and who neglected him and let him run wild. ’Tis his mother’s story repeated, sir. Look what neglect and ill-treatment have done for her—taken all the sweetness and tenderness out of her—withered the kernel of womanhood within her, and left only the dry hard shell. I don’t say that her son ever had the capability of becoming good and beautiful that she had. There’s something wrong in the strain of him, I believe, but I’m positive certain he’s worse than God made him. His mother had no affection for him ; she had none for any living

soul, I think, after the illness that followed her confinement. If the heart be the seat of the affections, sir, that poor woman as surely broke hers as any who has had the better fortune to die in breaking it. I can hardly think 'tis the same woman when I see her now and think of her as she was.

‘However, I’m straying away from Randle and his letter. I saw him long ago when I went to the theatre to tell Mrs. Bond of her husband’s death. I kind of lost my way amongst the painted boards and ups and downs of the stage, and seeing a group of carpenters and players, I went up to them to ask where I should find the lady. In the middle of the group I found a pasty-faced boy, dressed like a little lord, with lace ruffles and paste buckles, and a gold chain with a couple of watches at his little fob, holding a pot of porter in his hand and a

clay pipe in his mouth, which he was smoking for a wager, while the rascals around him watched his face to see whether they should win or lose.

“ “Do you begin to feel ill?” asked one.

“ “——” he replied, whereon they all laughed, at which encouragement he let off a string of vile oaths and foul words that made me sick to hear. I made my inquiry of the man who stood beside me.

“ “Mrs. Walsingham?” says he; “I don’t know. Where’s your mother, Randle?”

‘The boy replied with an indecency, for he had no respect even for his mother’s name. She dressed him in finery to gratify her vanity, she took him to the theatre or wherever she went to suit her convenience; and the boy knew it, and reproached her before my face with her treatment. She punished him at wrong times, and when she

wished to be obeyed she bribed him. The unwholesome life stunted the growth of his body, and forced the development of all that was bad in his disposition. At the theatre he learnt all the vices of the men, and of the women, too. No wonder, then, Mr. Falkland, that he is what we find him now—an undersized, impudent, insolent, and gene'lly unpleasant young man.'

'You have seen a good deal of him lately.'

'Yes, sir; they come very reg'lly—him and the Squire. The Squire seems to have a great deal of influence over him, and he respects the Squire prodigiously. They play cards for heavy stakes—and lose; at any rate, they say they do; and they come to me as bold as you please for money to pay their debts.'

'Do you let them have it?'

'Yes, sir. I've the Squire's note of hand

for two hundred, and Mr. Bond's for three hundred and fifty. That's pretty good for six weeks, isn't it, sir ?

'Do you know that my uncle has not the means to redeem his notes ?'

'Yes. Mrs. Bond—Mrs. Walsingham—Lady Kestral—your aunt has told me that. The Squire hasn't enough to pay his rent ; nevertheless, he's taken new lodgings in Bedford Square, and furnished 'em with the best.'

'And, knowing this, you lend him money ?'

'Yes, sir,' said Davie laconically, as he continued to stroke his cheek with the letter.

'May I ask why ?'

'There's a lot of reasons, but the foundation of 'em all is, that by some means or another he's found out that I am the possessor of Mr. Bond's fortune,

which he believes ought to be in his hands.'

'You learnt this from Lady Kestral?'

'Yes. He's using her kindly now, poor soul!'

I own I could not share Davie's sympathy for this heartless woman, and it seemed to me that he was carrying his generosity to an extravagant degree to suffer insult, robbery, and possible obloquy, in order to shield her from the just punishment of her own act.

'I shouldn't mind a few hundreds,' continued Davie thoughtfully, 'nor a few thousands, for the matter of that; but I don't see any likelihood of its ending there. It looks as if they meant to have every penny I have; and,' he added drily, 'I don't quite fancy that. There's some one else to think of besides that poor woman. And yet for the life of me——'

He broke off abruptly, throwing the letter on the table and scratching his head in perplexity. I knew that he had not told me all his difficulty.

‘What is there in the letter that troubles you?’ I asked.

‘Oh, that!’ he said carelessly, as if returning to a matter of minor importance. ‘’Tis a letter from my young gentleman—look at it, sir.’

I opened the letter, which was written in a hand to disgrace a schoolboy, and read :

‘DERE ADAMS,

‘Bein in licker last night, drew a bill upon you for 9ty 9 pounds 9teen, payble to Mr. J. Cohen at a munth, witch, as my father refuses to help me, must beg you to meat. You can keap this leter as an ack’ (a blot) ‘ment. Shall run down

and krack a bottle with you befour long, and pay my adresses to the lovelly Delia, to whom tendrest regards. Very sory to bin in licker, but am very sin' (a smudge) 'ly your friend,

‘RANDOLPH BOND.’

‘There can be no question as to the answer you should send to that letter,’ said I angrily; for his impudent familiarity in speaking of my Delia put me in a passion.

‘How would you answer it, sir?’ asked Davie quietly.

‘Tell him that you have no wish to see him, and refuse to meet his bill.’

‘It must finish somewhere; it can’t go on for ever,’ he replied, still in a calm tone of uncertainty.

For the first time I was angry with Davie. His generosity seemed to me nothing more than mean weakness.

‘ ’Tis a conspiracy to ruin you,’ said I.  
‘ ’Tis a levying of black mail, and your submission will only incite them to further outrage.’

‘ That’s what I thought, sir,’ he said, with provoking coolness. ‘ I’ll write to him and let him know in plain words, that though I meet this bill, I will not let him have another groat till the old score’s wiped off. So there’s an end to that ; and now let’s have a talk on some other subject that won’t ruffle up our tempers so much, for this is wus than slugs on tender sprouts.’





## CHAPTER XII.

DAVIE PREPARES TO ENTERTAIN NEW FRIENDS.

**I**N a few days our work at Seven-oaks was finished, and I gave up my lodging there, and took possession of the room in the Hall which had been mine in my youth. We took our models with us, though the outhouse in which we were to work was not yet ready for us. My Delia's work was placed upon a stand in the Hall, where it could come to no harm, but could be seen to advantage. I was proud that it should be seen by the families who came to pay their visits to Mr. Adams

and his daughter ; for my admiration of her delicate and artistic treatment of the subject increased every time I regarded it ; and she was no less proud in showing it, for all that was excellent she attributed to me.

‘ You speak of the model as if ’twas all my work,’ said I one day, in remonstrating against the praises she had bestowed on the composition of the figure and its expression ; ‘ you should be proud of your own achievement.’

‘ I am,’ she cried, drawing herself up to her full height and laughing.

‘ Then put your name upon the clay.’

‘ With all my heart,’ said she ; and she took up a tool that lay upon the pedestal, and wrote, in bold letters, ‘ Falkland.’

‘ ’Tis our name, dear,’ said she ; ‘ yours and mine, as ’tis our work.’

I expressed a wish one day that my good

friend, Mr. Rogers, should see the work, and criticise it before we began the large copy ; whereupon Davie, always hospitably inclined, suggested that I should beg him to come and spend a few days with me.

‘ Look you, sir,’ said he, ‘ ’twill be a week at least before the carpenter and glazier have finished the skylights and tables for your use ; and you’ve had no answer from the folks in London who are to bring the clay down, so I wager you’ll not get it before the house is ready. Why not make a little jollification ? We’ve had no house-warming yet ; and ’tis expected of us, be sure. There’s a dozen good families have called upon us, and the most charming set of people, for aristocrats, they seem to be ; not a bit like the London folks. No sneering at this, that, or ’tother, and no sniggering behind your back. Pleasant,

and glad to be treated pleasantly. A most miserable thing it is, calling upon folks for the first time ; and you may be sure they wouldn't give themselves the pain to do so if they didn't expect to be repaid for it some way. Let's have a reg'lar good entertainment : a fine dinner, with the best of everything from London — music and Italians, and a galy in the gardens after dark, with ever so many of those little additional lamps' (Davie had visited Vauxhall, and been highly delighted with the spectacle), 'and a display of fireworks—hey ?'

We agreed to the party, but persuaded Davie to dispense with the fireworks. The day was fixed ; and Delia wrote invitations to all the county families who had called or sent their cards. I also wrote to Mr. Rogers and Drench ; and in the course of a few days Davie had the supreme satisfaction

of knowing that everyone of the invitations was accepted.

‘We shall make a new set of friends,’ said he gleefully; ‘people who will take me for what I am worth, and like me none the less because my looks and speech are homely. We shall have women here, sir, as well as men; and that’s a sure sign that I am looked upon as a respectable man. ’Twill be a pleasure to see these honest folk, and to visit them in return; and when they find that I am a straightforward fair-dealing man, with good intentions, they’ll not think it amiss, may be, to let me keep a pack of hounds and join in coursing hares and hunting foxes, and what not, as soon as I can keep my seat in a saddle. Who knows but what I may come to be a Justice of the Peace one of these days! Well, thank God, we have not to seek

amongst London bucks and beaux for friends !’

In the following days he was occupied wholly in preparing for the entertainment of his friends ; the subject was never out of his head for ten minutes at a time. He went to London four or five times in the six days, and became somewhat tiresome with his perpetual speculations on the tastes and predilections of the coming visitors. Drench was of great service to him, for he knew what was the weakness of everyone who suffered from indigestion for miles round, and he made no secret of it.

‘ I shall have my hands full after this feast, I see very clearly,’ said he to me, with a cheerful smile ; ‘ and if I can only contrive to get Mr. Adams to let me place the guests at table before their favourite dishes, ’twill be fifty pounds in my pocket.’

Delia and I were as happy as Davie during those days, though in another way ; and it was marvellous how my temper changed as my health improved and my strength returned. I ceased to fret and worry myself with forebodings of unfortunate possibilities ; I accepted the happiness of the hour with gratitude, undiminished by one single misgiving as to the length of its duration ; and the forced idleness, which a few weeks before I should have regarded as nothing less than a calamity, was now the source of pleasure to me. I had never before experienced the delight of laziness ; but it seemed that, no matter what my condition was, it must be happy if Delia were by me. And that dear creature, it charmed me to see, shared my contentment fully, whether she ate with me in the cottage kitchen or in a noble dining-hall ; whether she worked by my side in an uncomfortable

shed, or idled with me in a garden ; whether she wore a plain russet gown, or was dressed with the richness of a princess. 'Twas indeed an earnest of our future happiness as man and wife, and a tacit promise of fidelity and love that outvalued the most passionate vows and protestations.

One day we visited the church where we had first met.

‘ 'Twas here,’ says she, as we stood by the monument I had repaired—‘ here that our hands first met.’

She looked at me in silence, with sparkling eyes, as if she wished to tell me something, yet dared not.

‘ Well?’ said I presently, in a tone of inquiry.

‘ I will show you something when we get home,’ she said, with a laugh.

And in the evening, when we were alone, she opened a little parcel tied with a ribbon,

and showed me a glove that still bore the white print of my plaster-covered hand.

‘See, love,’ said she; ‘I saw you were my master, and I loved you from the very first.’

We had returned from a walk one morning—’twas the day before the party—and Delia had gone up to her room to change her dress, when Davie came to me with trouble in his face, and, taking my arm, led me out on to the terrace.

‘I’ve had an unwelcome visitor while you have been away,’ said he. ‘Mr. Cohen has been here.’

‘Mr. Cohen?’ said I, not remembering the name at the moment.

‘The gentleman mentioned in Randle Bond’s letter, as I showed you ’tother night.’

‘Ah, I recollect.’

‘That young man has been in liquor again

seemingly, for he has drawn a second bill upon me, despite that I told him I would not meet another.'

' 'Tis audacious.'

' Yes,' said he ; ' 'tis of a piece with his insolence, to which I attribute the act rather than to drunkenness. He wishes to make me understand that he is my master, and that he shall draw what bills he pleases. He has not even thought fit to excuse the act. I have had no letter from him.'

' For what amount is this bill ?'

' A hundred and fifty pounds.'

' 'Tis the result of your promising to meet the other.'

' Yes. I half expected it. But I wished to put my doubt to the test.'

' You will not pay this bill ?'

' No, sir ; I thought over it well before I gave Mr. Cohen my answer ; and then I

told him that I would meet the first bill, but none other.'

'You did right. I hope you will be firm in this resolution.'

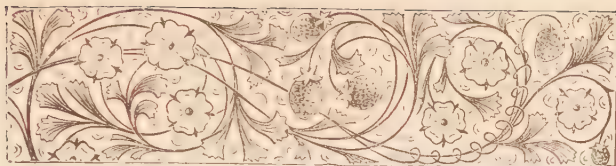
'I intend to be, sir. When I think 'tis right to do a thing, I am not easily moved from my purpose. This Mr. Cohen hinted that the bill was not payable for a month, and that, perhaps, if he called again, I might alter my mind. But I bade him deceive himself by no such hope, and told him that the lodge-keeper would have orders not to admit him if he called.'

'Well done,' said I. 'Depend upon it, this graceless cub will alter his tune, finding you are not to be played with. With the first bill yet unpaid, 'twill behove him to be civil. He will write a letter of apology, and there will be an end of it.'

'I wish there may,' said Davie, with no alteration of his lugubrious tone.

'Twas evening before he recovered his spirits ; but then he cast off the recollection of this visit, and threw himself heart and soul into the work of preparing for the morrow's entertainment.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE COMING OF UNINVITED VISITORS TO ADAMS'S HALL.

**M**R. ROGERS had promised to leave London by the coach that arrives at Maidstone at ten o'clock, and a chariot was to be sent to meet him there. I intended to go in the carriage, but as the morning was particularly fair, and as Delia was occupied in some household duty, I started half an hour earlier on foot in preference. I had stepped over a league of the distance, when I was stopped by a voice calling my name from the window of a

hack-fly which had just passed me. Turning about, I perceived that the coach was drawing up, and that the person who called was none other than my aunt, Lady Kestral.

She was alone.

‘Oh, my dear George!’ she cried, with a prodigious show of pleasure, ‘I *am* so glad to see you—you can’t tell. Ah! you have hurt your right arm—oh! I am so sorry ; I hope ’tis nothing painful. I have thought of you so often ; indeed, I have dreamed of you more than once—for you have a figure which is not easily forgot—and you are just the very one of all the people in the world I most wished to see. Do, do step in and talk to me for a little five minutes—’tis a pleasure I would not lose for all the universe.’

As the coach was going in the direction of the Hall, and I was anxious to know if my aunt’s journey in any way concerned

the welfare of my friends, I accepted the invitation. after a moment's reflection, in which I saw that I could still get to Maidstone in time to meet Mr. Rogers, by taking the chariot, which we should presently encounter.

‘How do I look, dear?’ asked my aunt, turning her face to me for inspection, as soon as I had taken the seat beside her and the coach was in motion. ‘I believe I must look frightful, for I have been up since half-past four—dragged from my bed in the middle of the night, as it were, and am nearly shaken to bits by the horrid journey. ‘Don’t my eyes look sunk?’

Her face looked very pretty, but I did not tell her so, though possibly she looked for compliments.

‘You have a very good complexion,’ I said.

‘Well, ’tis all natural. You may prove

it if you like, George,' said she, with an arch leer.

'I would not do you the injustice to doubt your word,' said I.

'You are very complimentary,' said she, making the best of my coldness, 'and prodigious handsome. I protest I should fall in love with you, were I not your aunt.' Her foot, as though by accident, touched mine as she spoke.

I made some reply as I withdrew my foot, to the purpose, or otherwise, I know not, for I was wondering whither this flirtation was leading, and comparing these tricks with the innocent love of my Delia.

'I didn't remark you were so handsome when we met before,' said she; 'but that is scarce to be wondered at, for I was so upset by my fear of that horrid old man, my husband, discovering my secret, and of you by mischance revealing it to him, that I

could think of nothing pleasant ; and yet I must have seen in your face then the indications of an amiable and honourable disposition, to have entrusted you as I did with the secret of my life.'

'Twould have been more dangerous to your own welfare to have told me nothing,' said I.

'You mean that having learnt the secret from my lips, you feel bound in honour to screen it from discovery?'

This was not at all what I meant, but the fact was undeniable. I said something to that effect, whereupon, taking my hand, she said :

'Oh, George! if you knew what a desolate unhappy woman I am, how I yearn for love and sympathy, you would not—could not be so cold towards me ; and the support you must give me from a sense of honour, you would offer me from a feeling

of pity. Surely no one has added to my misfortunes by speaking against me to you?’

‘I understand your hint,’ said I, snatching my hand from hers, for her selfish ingratitude incensed me beyond measure. ‘You wish to know if Davie has revealed anything which you may for your own purpose have omitted to tell me. I will put your mind at rest by assuring you that he is as faithful to you as you have been false to him, and as incapable of doing you an injury as though you were still the penitent young girl striving to do right.’

As some people laugh to conceal their tears, so my aunt wept, or pretended to weep, to conceal the satisfaction she must have felt at this assurance of Davie’s fidelity.

‘I am a wicked ungrateful wretch,’ she cried between her sobs—very distinctly—  
‘to doubt the only friend I ever had. ’Tis

no excuse that the treachery of the world has made me doubt the existence of purity and honesty. Scold me, George, punish me as you will—I do not deserve to have a friend—disclose my secret and let me suffer the vindictive fury of your uncle.’

‘ You know well that I shall do no such thing.’

‘ You will be tempted to do so if your regard for Davie is as great as I believe it to be.’

‘ What do you mean?’

Lady Kestral overcame her emotion by a small effort, for it was inconvenient to sustain a protracted conversation and the simulation of distress together, and having wiped her eyes, heaved a shivering sigh, and replaced her handkerchief in her pocket. she said :

‘ Do you know what has happened since you left London?’

‘ You had better tell me.’

‘ Lord Kestral has found out Davie’s identity. I believe he made the discovery on that first night at Park Lane, and discerned that you helped me to deceive him. From what you know of him you will imagine, perhaps, that after this discovery his treatment of me was more brutal than before. I expected he would strike me—or take some mean revenge upon me. He did nothing of the sort. He never mentioned his suspicions, and from that day to this he has treated me with civility, and in such a manner as a man should treat his wife. As you see, I have decent clothes to my back—I have also a few trinkets. He has taken decent lodgings, and provided me with a maid and pin-money, and introduced one or two friends to me. When he goes out he takes me with him ; at home he is ceremoniously civil, and insists upon my

son Randle treating me with respect and deferring to my wishes.'

'In a word,' said I, 'he has made you feel the benefit of acting in concert with him.'

'Yes, if you must put it in an unpleasant way.'

'And you have acted in concert with Lord Kestral.'

'I don't understand you, George,' she said, with some embarrassment.

'You have taken care to show Davie that your present and future well-being depends upon his yielding to the extortions of your husband and son.'

My aunt called God to witness that she had no such thought in her mind.

'But sure,' added she; 'was it so, I see no reason why you should speak to me, nephew, as if 'twas a crime. 'Tis to Davie's advantage that things should go on amicably

—and to Miss Delia's also,' she concluded, with a significant smirk.

‘And your amiable mission at the present moment is to show Mr. Adams the advantage of taking up the bill your son has had the audacity to draw upon him,’ said I.

‘I know nothing of any such matter,’ she replied tartly. ‘I only know that our horse cast a shoe, and that his lordship, rather than suffer me to put up with the inconvenience of staying in a village ale-house, procured this coach and sent me forward to seek Mr. Adams's hospitality. I do not deny that my mind was occupied with the thought of my dear friend's welfare, and seeing you, I thought to obtain your assistance to that end, as Miss Adams' welfare is bound up with that of her father, and I know you are deeply interested in that quarter; but it seems that I chose an

unfortunate moment, and have made you lose your walk and your temper at the same time ; however,' said she, giving a tug at the string that communicated with the driver. 'I hope 'tis not too late for you to recover what you have lost.'

This small sarcasm touched me not in the least, but I was concerned lest my want of tact had lost me the opportunity of helping my friend. I was silent a moment, and though the coach had stopped, I made no movement to open the door.

'I do not see,' said I, 'how it is possible for me to help Davie : the remedy lies entirely in your own hands. You alone can alter the conditions which threaten his peace and happiness.'

'I shall be extremely overjoyed if you tell me how I can do that.'

'By doing at once what you should have done at first—by telling your husband that

you have seen the will which bequeathed Mr. Bond's fortune to his servant.'

She looked at me in utter astonishment for a moment.

'Are you serious?' she asked.

'Perfectly.'

She laughed outright.

'Do you suppose,' she asked, 'that my own happiness and welfare is less dear to me than it is to Davie? or that the sense of honour which prevents you from revealing this fact to your uncle is of more importance to you than the realization of those plans which I have been for years patiently maturing is to me? I am afraid you have lost something else than your walk and your temper this morning.'

'Self is not to be considered when a duty is to be performed.'

'A prodigious fine sentiment, upon my honour! But don't you think, nephew, that

as to self, we are pretty much of a piece? 'Tis very natural you should consider my happiness as less important than Miss Delia's dowry, but you might take a little care to conceal the fact.'

I think I made a very poor retort, for I was neither inclined to repartee, nor prepared to meet a charge so unexpected and absurd.

My aunt was such an artful woman, and so good an actress, than I am inclined to believe her quarrel with me on this occasion was not the mere outcome of vexation, though doubtless it gave her some gratification to express the resentment she naturally felt in having her amiable overtures rebuffed. I can rather believe that, seeing the bent of my inclinations and the unfavourable state of my feelings towards her, she designed her taunts to pique my self-esteem and provoke me to keep her secret, as a proof that I was guiltless of

those mercenary motives she had imputed to me.

We parted with a very formal salute, and I turned again towards Maidstone, while she continued her journey to the Hall. The chariot which was to carry my friend and me back to Maplehurst overtaking me, I jumped in, and so arrived at Maidstone ten minutes before the arrival of the London coach.

I saw no gentleman's equipage before any of the alehouses on the road, but I caught sight of my uncle, and a young man whom I guessed to be Mr. Bond, lounging idly in the balcony of the Royal, in the High Street of Maidstone, which convinced me that my aunt's excuse was a falsehood, and that she was purposely sent in advance to prepare Davie for the interview with her husband or her son which was to follow.



## CHAPTER XIV.

DAVIE BRINGS LORD KESTRAL TO REASON.

**D**AVIE met me and Mr. Rogers at the door of the Hall when we arrived. After the customary civilities were exchanged, Mr. Rogers was conducted to the chamber set apart for him to change his travelling-dress, and Davie and I were left alone.

‘Where is Delia?’ I asked—’twas usually my first question when I had been separated from her.

‘There,’ said Davie. He was standing by the window in sombre thought, and as

he spoke he took his hand from his chin, and pointed with his thumb to the bottom of the lawn, where I perceived Lady Kestral altering the shape of my sweetheart's hat, and Delia leaning on the balustrade, regarding the manipulation listlessly. 'We have unexpected guests to-day, sir,' he added, in a tone of dejection.

'Unwelcome as unexpected!' said I.

'I don't think I may say your aunt is unwelcome, sir. If I am not glad to see her, 'tis only because I feel for the misfortunes of that unhappy woman.'

I was silent. It was not for me to tell him that his sympathy was misplaced and undeserved.

'Look you, sir,' he continued, 'is she not more to be commiserated than the blind old man you figured there, as an object for love and pity? He has lost but one sense, and the rest are sharpened to catch what is beau-

tiful and find delight in it; but that poor woman there has lost all susceptibility, and can find nothing in all the world to give her happiness. The birds might all be dead, the whole earth withered, and the sun a blot in the skies—'twould make no difference to her. There's not a soul whose loss she'd mourn. Her highest hope is to gratify some mean ambition, to obtain a place of rank which may make her envied. Is it the colour of the ribbon or the form of the hat that gives her pleasure?—not a bit; 'tis because the ruling fashion is for this or that. She walked in the garden because Delia proposed it; she would have preferred to spend the time in Delia's wardrobe. She cares to talk of nothing else but fashions and intrigues—even to Delia. What should you say, sir, if Delia had no better pleasure?'

· God forbid that she should find pleasure in such matters,' I cried, vexed—immoder-

ately, doubtless—to think her chaste ear should receive such scandals as Lady Kestral could tell. ‘Delia has nothing in common with that woman.’

‘And yet——’ Davie checked himself, and shrugging his shoulders said: ‘I have told you the story of that woman’s life, sir, more than once already.’

‘You know that Lord Kestral and Mr. Bond are coming,’ I said, after a pause which he seemed disinclined to break.

‘Yes,’ he replied, his voice and manner changing at once from pity to anger. ‘I must have it out with them the moment they arrive. If they stay in this house it shall be as my guests, not as my masters. They shall be civil to my friends, and treat me with respect. I don’t think I shall lack courage or firmness either, for I’ve thought out what ’tis fit to do; but I will have you in the room at the time, sir, if you have no

objection, that they may see I have no intention to make a secret of the matter. It would suit them to keep up this pretence of ignorance. but,' he added, with an air of full determination, 'it don't suit me. They shan't upset my plans; no, sir, they shan't even spoil this day's happiness !'

We had not long to wait for the interview. In half an hour a carriage arrived at the door, and Lord Kestral and Mr. Bond stepped out.

I had now an opportunity of seeing Mr. Bond closely, and I found that Delia, in describing him as 'an odious little person,' had in a few words said all that a more minute description would convey. He was short, fat, and flabby, with a head disproportionately large. He had a short turned-up nose, a pendulous under-lip, a cadaverous complexion, shifty, cowardly little eyes that never looked one full in the face, except in

a bullying, defiant manner, as if he was conscious of his own weakness, and felt it necessary to assert the contrary. He walked with a little mincing gait ; his hand shook, possibly from the effect of recent libations, and he spoke with a squeaky high voice, which he seemed incapable to modulate in equable accent—'twas the voice of a small puppy which must either whine or snarl.

Davie, with instinctive hospitality, held out his hand to his visitors, and received the two fingers of my uncle, and then the two fingers of Mr. Bond—for this young man watched his stepfather, and, as nearly as he could, imitated his grand airs. When Lord Kestral, having examined me through his glasses, made me a very slight inclination of his head, Mr. Bond did the same. I could have laughed at the impudent little mannikin.

· You have been laying out money here,

as elsewhere, Mr. Adams,' said Lord Kestral in a tone of reproof, as he paused upon the steps to look through his eyeglass across the lawn. 'Marble is expensive.'

'Damnably expensive,' snarled Mr. Bond.

'Yes,' said Davie coldly; 'I have laid out money here, though not so much by ten or twelve thousand pounds as I intended. We must see what we can do with that bottom meadow, Mr. Falkland: if you don't think it out of place, I'll let the man make a lake there, as he proposed.'

My uncle's face did not lose its smile, but I saw his fingers twitch as though he were making a clutch at the escaping treasure.

'You part with your money very readily, Mr. Adams,' he said drily.

'When it suits me, Squire,' answered Davie sententiously.

'Indeed ! Ha !' Lord Kestral dropped

his glass, paused a moment, and then, in dry, measured tones, said : ‘ I wish to have a few words with you, Mr. Adams.’

‘ With all my heart,’ Davie said, leading the way into the house.

‘ Lady Kestral is here, I presume ?’

‘ Yes ; she is in the room yonder. Do you wish her to join us ?’

‘ No. Mr. Bond, you can leave us, if you wish.’

Mr. Bond took the hint, made an awkward bow, and minced off to the drawing-room.

‘ We will go in the library, Squire,’ said Davie. ‘ Mr. Falkland, will you come with us ?’

‘ What I have to say is of a private nature,’ said Lord Kestral, stopping short at the door, which Davie had opened.

‘ I have no secrets from Mr. Falkland,’ said Davie ; ‘ he is my friend.’

‘Very probably,’ said his lordship, with a little cough. ‘As, however, I have no intention to make him my confidant, I must decline to speak in his presence.’

‘Very good,’ said Davie. ‘When he is not present you can say what you have to say. And so, as that matter’s disposed of for the present, we shall be able to tackle another affair upon which I have a few words to say to you, Squire. Will you have the goodness to walk in?’

His lordship reflected a moment. Then he walked in as he was invited. ’Twas the best thing he could do, the only alternative being to withdraw from the house and take his family with him.

‘Now, Squire,’ said Davie, as soon as the door was shut, ‘in the first place, I want to know about this bill that Master Randle drew upon me.’

‘What about it?’ asked my uncle, taken

aback by the suddenness of the attack and the determined manner of Davie, who had drawn up a chair and planted himself directly in front of him.

‘*All about it,*’ replied Davie, smacking his thigh.

‘I shall be glad if you will be a little less violent and a little more definite.’

‘To begin at the beginning then, Master Jackanapes drew a bill upon me, a short time since, for ninety pounds odd, and apologized for the act as well as he could, I believe—and that was not very well. He said he was in liquor at the time. Allowing that this proceeding arose from a failing rather than from intention, I forgave the offence and promised to meet the bill; but I warned him at the time that I would pay to no other order of his, and warned him not to repeat the performance.’

‘I know nothing of this.’

· Would you like to see his letter?’

· No. I have no wish to interfere in the matter.’

· Very likely not,’ said Davie, with a short hard laugh. · However, you understand the position of things.’

Lord Kestral made a stiff bow, and took out his snuff-box.

· Very well. Yesterday morning comes a gentleman Jew, Mr. Cohen, to ask me if I shall be prepared, the end of a month, to pay a bill signed by Mr. Randle Bond for two hundred and fifty pounds. I told him I certainly would not pay that nor any other order of the same signature, and so sent him about his business. Now, Squire, I must tell you, in case you know no more about this affair than about the first, that Mr. Randle has offered no sort of excuse or explanation of this action, which was done in direct opposition to the warning I gave him.

If he was in liquor when he wrote that order, and has been in liquor ever since, I pity him, and will forgive him, if he asks my pardon ; if not, you must take the best means of getting him out of this house without delay, for I assure you he shall not stay in it, if his audacity is not explained and atoned for by the best apology he can make.'

My uncle was fairly bewildered by Davie's exhibition of strength. The pinch of snuff he had taken from the box he kept applying first to one nostril and then to the other, all the time Davie spoke, ignoring the fact that his open snuff-box tilted at an angle, and, shaking with his hand, was dribbling the precious dust over his velvet breeches.

'I—I fail to see, Mr. Adams—I fail to see why you address me on the subject of your grievance,' he said, after finishing the pinch of snuff in reflective silence.

'You know nothing more of this last

bill than of the first?' said Davie interrogatively.

'I know something about the bill, certainly. Mr. Cohen told me of it yesterday evening.

'On leaving me yesterday he said he should apply to you at once. Your visit, following so quickly, led me to hope that your object was to explain the matter and make things pleasant. With that hope I gave you my hand and asked you into my house. You seem to be in perfect accord with Mr. Bond, and must know his intention in coming here. If he has not come to apologize, or you have not come to apologize for him, I have as much cause for complaint in your conduct as in his.'

Lord Kestral rose to his feet as if he intended to express his indignation in having his conduct questioned by Davie; then he sat down again, as if second consideration showed him the impolicy of ending the in-

terview in that way. He shrugged his shoulders, and with a careless flourish of his hands which sent the last grain of snuff out of his box, he exclaimed :

‘Pish! After all, why should I take offence? You’re in the right. If Randle has offended, he must apologize. ’Twas a more important matter that brought me here, and I protest I am entirely ignorant of his intentions.’

‘In that case, Squire,’ said Davie, rising from his seat, ‘I’ll send for the young man at once, and we will put the question to him point-blank.’

He crossed to the fireplace, and laid his hand upon the bell-pull.

‘One moment,’ cried Lord Kestral, in haste. ‘Don’t ring the bell, Adams. Mr. Bond, you know, is a young man of very undisciplined habits. He may have some idea that circumstances justify his act.’

‘He had better be undeceived at once, then,’ said Davie, still holding the bell-pull.

‘Don’t be hasty, Mr. Adams. ’Tis hardly fair to provoke a person of irritable disposition to an angry outburst which he would possibly repent when his temper grew cool.’

‘Why, that’s true. Squire,’ cried Davie. ‘’Tis the best thing I’ve ever heard you say.’

‘There is no need of anger. Let us proceed in a diplomatic, reasonable spirit.’

‘By all means. I hope, Mr. Falkland, you’ll just give me a word if you find me getting unreasonable. I know this young buck isn’t overburdened with patience, and one mustn’t expect too much of him all of a sudden. Come, how are we to make him understand that he has gone wrong, and must eat humble pie?’

‘I will talk to him in the course of the day. I undertake to do that, and to make

him offer an apology.' My uncle leaned back, evidently much relieved by this turn of affairs, and wiped away the drops that had gathered in his eyes, as he continued, 'It shall be arranged in an orderly, gentlemanly way—no noise, no violence, you understand. Persuasion, conciliation and concession—these are the means by which a diplomatic triumph is secured.'

'I've no objection,' said Davie. 'You may secure as much diplomatic triumph as you please, so that the young cub is brought to behave himself decently.'

My uncle waved his hands in a reassuring manner, and gave himself up to silent thought for a few moments. He looked so satisfied and contented at that moment, that I believe his thoughts had wandered from the present situation entirely. Perhaps he was indulging in speculations of the greatness he should have attained to had he

obtained a place in the Government instead of losing his seat in the House of Commons.

‘I think you had better speak to Master Bond as soon as possible,’ Davie said, seating himself as if there was still something he wished to have out.

‘All in good time, all in good time,’ said Lord Kestral.

‘Just so, and I take it there’s no time so good as the present. For you see, Squire, I have friends coming to dinner—friends very much after my own heart—and I wish it to be understood quite clearly that whoever offends them will offend me. They are to be treated with respect. Master Randle may laugh at me behind my back as much as he chooses, but if I catch him laughing at any of my friends—out he goes by the garden gate.’

My uncle glanced from Davie to me and

back to him, seeming also to have more to say than circumstances permitted.

‘I will take the first opportunity I have, and do my best to achieve a very difficult task,’ he said. ‘For Mr. Bond is irritable, and finds it difficult at times to govern his temper, especially when he believes that he has a right to act as he pleases.’

‘Now we are coming to the point,’ said Davie. ‘You shall tell me if you please, Squire, what right this young fellow thinks he has to draw bills upon me.’

‘It is that which I may explain to you when we are in private.’

‘There is no need to play at cross questions and crooked answers. Master Randle believes he has a right to my money. Is that what you mean?’

‘That is a matter for future discussion,’ replied my uncle, with deliberation.

Davie turned upon his chair, smacked his

thigh, and tossed his head in vexation at the impossibility of getting a straightforward answer from Lord Kestral.

‘ ‘Twas as bad as digging for turnips when the ground’s froze,’ he said to me afterwards ; ‘ when you get ’em. they’re not worth having.’

My uncle, on the other hand, seemed vastly pleased with the effect of his circumlocution. He crossed his meagre shank over his knee, held his head on one side, looked at Davie with a ridiculous air of pity, and swung one arm over the back of his chair, while with the other hand he played carelessly with the dangling trinkets at his fob.

‘ The shortest way,’ said I, ‘ will be for me to leave the room.’

‘ No, Mr. Falkland ; I beg you to stay,’ said Davie, interrupting me. ‘ I want everything to be open and straightforward. Look you, Squire’—he faced my uncle again—

‘there is no necessity to beat about the bush. You know, and Mr. Falkland here knows, that I am that Davie who was gardener to Mr. Bond, of Southgate, and that it is his money that I am spending. Now, tell me, with a simple “Yes” or “No,” if it is the knowledge of this fact which makes Master Randle believe that he is justified in demanding money from me.’

‘You admit that your money belonged to Mr. Bond, of Southgate?’ Lord Kestral exclaimed.

‘Certainly I do; and here is Mr. Falkland to witness the confession.’

‘Then I agree with you there is no longer any necessity for reserve. It was the suspicion of this fact that made Mr. Bond feel justified in demanding money from you.’

‘Ah! that is something. And it is this consideration which has also made you anxious about my expenses, eh, Squire?’

Davie asked with a laugh. 'So concerned lest I should invest my money in profitless adventures, or bestow it upon unworthy persons—this is why you exposed the men who borrowed money from me upon bad security, and cautioned me against fraudulent acquaintances, and discovered that the horses I wanted to buy were spavined, and found that the marble on my lawn was expensive?'

'It is natural I should be concerned on behalf of my wife's son,' said my uncle, with some embarrassment, for Davie's manner showed no sign of culpability.

'So it is, and honourable, too,' cried Davie, with good-humour. 'I begin to like you, Squire. You have paid me this visit on his behalf, perhaps.'

'Yes; and on yours.'

'Why, this is more than I have any right to expect of you, since I take it you look upon me as a thief.'

‘I should be sorry to call you by so hard a name, Mr. Adams, for I believe that your intentions have been good, however much your conduct may have been in fault.’

‘Thank you, Squire; I think I may take credit for meaning well. I see you wish to make matters pleasant all round.’

‘I wish to avoid a public scandal, to obviate exposure, to arrange the affair in an amicable manner, to compromise matters in such a manner that all parties shall be satisfied. This is why I came, for, as I admit, Mr. Bond is hasty, and at times violent, and left to his own devices might, in a moment of desperation, do you irremediable mischief, without in any degree improving his own condition. You have already seen a proof of his violent and ungovernable disposition. You told him you would not meet his bill, and he immediately drew one for double the amount of the first.’

Davie sat in thought for a minute ; then he asked gravely :

‘ And what do you think he would do if you did not succeed in arranging matters with me?’

‘ He might find a lawyer to take up his case and institute criminal proceedings against you. I don’t say that he would gain his cause. You have money to pay for better lawyers than ever he could command, and even with the admission you have made before Mr. Falkland this morning, I doubt if sufficient evidence could be found to convict you, if you chose to plead “Not guilty.” But you would lose every friend you have, and could never dare to take your daughter into creditable society, for fear of being treated with aversion and contempt ; for, whatever may be the legal aspect of the case, you would be morally guilty in the eyes of

all honest people who could reason for themselves.’

Davie, with his hands clasped and his arms resting on his knees, had been listening with his eyes on the ground. He now lifted them to me, and nodded assent gloomily.

‘That is supposing you do not prove that you have a legal right to the money,’ I said in a low tone to Davie.

Davie shook his head. My uncle lent his ear to catch my words : he probably failed to hear what I said ; but he could see that Davie declined the suggestion.

‘There is another course which a young man of Mr. Bond’s violent, and I may say vindictive temperament, might, and I think would pursue. He could follow you wherever you went in society, tell his own story, and spread damaging reports of your character.’

‘Ah, I think I could cure him of that,’ Davie said sententiously. ‘Well,’ he added, drawing himself up, ‘what arrangement do you propose?’

‘Some restitution must be made. You can never pay back the full amount of Mr. Bond’s fortune, nor do I suggest that you should give all you have.’ Davie bowed his acknowledgment. ‘But you must do all that is reasonable and just.’

‘I am quite ready to do that.’

‘Good!’ exclaimed Lord Kestral gleefully. ‘Now, Mr. Adams, since you object to paying in an irregular indiscriminate fashion, I have hit upon a means which will be more direct, and may meet the necessities of the case to the satisfaction of all parties. I presume that this extravagant mode of living is not to your taste—that you would be far more content to live in a humbler

style, at the expense, say, of two or three hundred a year.'

'Very likely.'

'I presume also, that you have taken this unsuitable position in society, and been lavish with your money, to gratify the inclinations and tastes of your daughter.'

'You're about right, Squire.'

'You may also have had another object in view—that of providing a suitable husband for your daughter.'

'Right again.'

'Now, the means I propose will maintain your daughter in the condition of life she prefers, and allow her still to indulge her expensive tastes, and at the same time provide her with a husband of a good position and connection, and at the same time satisfy the demands of Mr. Bond, supposing that you will consent to accept a comparatively humble competency.'

‘I wish for nothing better ; and now, Squire, let me know how all these good results are to be obtained.’

‘By your giving your daughter in marriage to Mr. Bond, and making her a dowry of——’

He got no farther, for Davie, after a moment’s astonishment at this proposal, burst into a loud laugh, that took away his lordship’s breath with surprise.

‘I do not understand your merriment,’ said he, as Davie’s hilarity subsided.

‘Do you know, my lord,’ said I, ‘that Miss Adams is betrothed to me?’

‘I heard something of the matter,’ replied he ; ‘and let me tell you that I have not overlooked your credit in this scheme. Despite your revolutionary principles, sir, I opine you have yet sufficient regard for the honour of your family to avoid an alliance with the daughter of a—of a——’

‘I am not a thief, Squire,’ said Davie quietly but firmly. ‘Mr. Bond has no more claim to my money than—than you have.’

‘In the absence of a will, the late Mr. Bond’s fortune should be in the hands of his heir-at-law,’ said Lord Kestral, with an assumption of ease which did not conceal the inquietude he felt.

‘Master Randle has all that is due to him, and more.’

‘But the money!’

‘That was given to me unconditionally by my master before his death.’

‘Can you prove that?’

‘I can prove it, if it is necessary. And now, Squire, listen to me. It is in Mr. Bond’s power, as you have shown, to make me very unhappy, and to cause a great deal of trouble to very innocent people. It is in your power, or in the power of any un-

principled and ill-disposed person, to do mischief to me. I admit that I do not want my affairs to be dragged before the public, and I do not want to be perpetually at war with evil-doers and slanderers. You have influence over Mr. Bond; he will listen to your advice, when mine might only lead him to some act of senseless revenge. I think he may be guided by a sense of self-interest, where reason and good-feeling would fail to lead him. I wish him to understand that I lent him money, not from fear, and that I ceased to lend him money because I found it only rendered him insolent. Let him know that while he behaves decently I will treat him like a gentleman, and that, for his mother's sake, I will assist him in any enterprise by which he may live in independence, if I find that the enterprise is genuine, and

his wish to do well sincere. Let him understand, also, that if he forces me to produce the will, he will have to give up possession of the property at Southgate, which that will makes mine. Further, Squire, assure him that I am not so careless in money matters as one might think, and that I hold his papers, as I hold yours, for every farthing I have lent, and that should he annoy me in any way, I shall put all those papers under a cover, and send them as a present to the gentleman Jew, Mr. Cohen.'

'Not mine, Mr. Adams!' cried his lordship, in undisguised alarm.

'Yes, Squire, yours also ; for you tell me you have influence over this young man, and if he offends I shall take it you have failed in your friendly duty to me.'

'Good God! I have been hoodwinked

—deceived. You—you—you never hinted at the possession of a will.’

‘You have taken the utmost pains to prevent my telling you.’

‘Lady Kestral told me nothing about it—she must have known it.’ Lord Kestral dashed the rheum from his eyes, and turned them, with a baleful look, towards the window, through which, at that moment, his wife’s laughter came.

‘Possibly she thought it was destroyed. One word more, Squire. I am anxious that Lady Kestral should hold a good position in society—the position you have lately given her. If your means are not sufficient to meet all the expenses, you know I shall be glad to help you. We can arrange for the payment of a certain sum every quarter.’

‘Mr. Adams, I have wronged you,’ said Lord Kestral, holding out his hand.

‘I’m glad to hear you say so, Squire. ’Tis as good as a promise not to do it again.’

He showed such good-temper that Lord Kestral seemed to think he might get some further advantage.

‘About that bill, Mr. Adams,’ he said, taking him by the arm and speaking in his blindest tones, as they went towards the door. ‘If Mr. Bond apologizes, I suppose you will forgive all, in your generous wide spirit—hum? You’ll pay Cohen, eh?’

‘No, Squire ; not a farthing. The only thing I shall ever give Mr. Cohen will be that packet of promises-to-pay in the event of Mr. Bond’s not behaving properly.’

‘I’ll talk to him without a moment’s delay,’ said my uncle ; ‘I’ll talk to him at once,’—and then his jaw fell between his fingers and thumb, as he looked askance at

the floor ; for he was, perhaps, realizing that a more difficult task lay before him than he had yet undertaken, and that diplomacy is not always an easy science.

END OF VOL. II.



# HONEST DAVIE.

A NOVEL.

BY

FRANK BARRETT,

AUTHOR OF

'LIEUTENANT BARNABAS,' 'A PRODIGAL'S PROGRESS,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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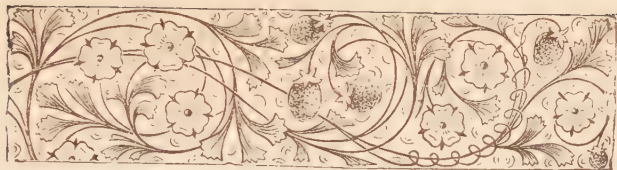


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# HONEST DAVIE.

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## CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH DAVIE IS PUT TO SHAME.

**W**E left the library, and soon after Lord Kestral and Mr. Bond withdrew from our society, and we lost sight of them. As I found out later, they spent upwards of an hour in the private room at the Crown and Sword in Maplehurst village.

About an hour before dinner Lord Kestral reappeared alone, and made himself very agreeable to the ladies who

were practising archery upon the lawn, by his gallantry, and to the gentlemen, and Davie in particular, by a genial and unpretentious manner, which was as unlike his ordinary habit as white from black. Coming to me, he expressed surprise and distress to find that I carried my arm in a sling, and begging me to tell him how I came by my hurt, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and led me a little way apart.

‘For God’s sake, George,’ said he, when we were out of hearing, ‘forget any slight I may have put upon you, and give me what assistance you can. Let us slip into yonder alley, where we can talk privily.’

As we turned into the side-walk, which was screened from the lawn by a yew hedge, I caught sight of Randolph Bond sneaking out of it by the farther end, with his head in his shoulders and his hands in

his breeches-pockets. I directed my uncle's attention to him.

'Tis his way—a sneaking, shamefaced, spiritless dog!' exclaimed he bitterly. 'When he sees the company gone, and fancies they're seated at table, he'll go into the house and take a place. 'Tis a mean, slavish, obstinate, senseless, pig-headed brute; and I would to Heaven he had never come in my path!'

He was silent until his anger subsided; then he said :

'George, do you think Adams is in earnest? Do you think he will carry out his threat, and hand over my acknowledgments to Cohen if that d——d Randle misbehaves?'

'I am certain of it; I feel sure that he will keep his word.'

'But don't you think, nephew, that if you pointed out to him the injustice of making

me responsible for the conduct of that whelp, who is not even my son, he would be a little more reasonable?’

‘I don’t see any injustice to point out to him.’

‘What, George! would you have me made bankrupt, and cast in prison for the rest of my life, just because my step-son won’t do as I bid him? I can’t force him to hold his tongue.’

‘Mr. Adams is no more than just in putting the responsibility upon you; for Randle Bond would never have offended or given trouble to Mr. Adams without your instigation.’

‘I made a mistake—I own it with contrition. I am willing to ask Mr. Adams’s forgiveness for what I have done. I thought the fellow had a just claim to his father’s money.’

‘And you made him think so, also.

Well, now that you know you were in error, it is your duty to undeceive him.'

'That's what I've been trying to do for the last two hours, but the obstinate brute won't be persuaded. It don't suit him to believe it. He gets nothing by it. It does not matter a snap to him whether Adams destroys the papers or hands them over to Cohen. He has no money to lose. He is still a minor, and 'tis I who must pay his debts.'

'You led him to incur them.'

'That has nothing to do with it!' cried my uncle, clenching his fists in vexation. 'The ungrateful wretch would like to see me thrown into prison. He's as rebellious as an Irishman. He will have it that the offer of money to keep your aunt in a decent position—which is, of course, no more than she has a right to as old Bond's widow—is a bribe that I have accepted for my own in-

terest. He won't believe a word in Adams's favour. All he says is, "Let him show the will and prove his right;" and this he repeats till he puts me in a passion. And between you and me there's reason in his doubts; for if that will exists, why should Adams refuse to show it? Why, if it gave him even more property than he has, why did he not produce it when Bond's widow played him false? Have you ever seen the will?'

'No.'

'Has he ever explained to you why he has not produced it, and taken legal possession of that which he now holds against the law?'

'No.'

'Begad!' said he, after a moment's reflection, 'it looks as if he were lying. 'Tis a punishable offence to suppress a will of any sort. What mortal reason could

he have for concealing it, at the risk of being accused of dishonesty?’

‘For some good and unselfish reason, I will wager my life,’ said I.

He made no reply, but walked along in silent cogitation. I believe he was weighing the advisability of turning even now against Davie. It was impossible that a man so devoid of generosity could believe in anyone foregoing a substantial advantage from a generous motive.

‘I wager that sly devil’—he referred to his wife—‘knows all about it,’ said he thoughtfully. ‘But I suppose I mustn’t even ask her now, for fear of losing the provision Adams promised. Begad, I’m hemmed in on every side!’

At this moment a servant entered the walk, and perceiving us, came and said that dinner was served. We hastened towards the lawn to join the company.

‘There’s no time for consideration,’ said my uncle on the way. ‘We must do our best to prevent Randle causing annoyance at the table. I shall look to you to help me, George.’

‘Willingly,’ said I; ‘a servant shall be stationed at the door to forbid his entrance to the house.’

‘That will never do. He’ll go to London at once. There’s a rascal of a lawyer who has promised to aid him, and before a week’s out I might have to give up the little property at Southgate, and be left with never a farthing to meet Cohen’s claim, at the end of the month. Begad, I wish everyone was at the devil! Look you, George—you must get o’ one side of Randle when the ladies leave the table, and I’ll get t’other, and we must divert him between us; and for the Lord’s sake, keep the wine out of his way.’

Davie gave his arm to Lady Kestral, and led the way into the house, and I followed with my sweet Delia; and presently we sat down to dinner as merry a party as needs be.

I never saw Davie in a happier mood, and his guests seemed fully to share his good-humour. The ladies were well pleased to find themselves in the company of a lord and his lady—for though of good substantial families, there was none with a title—and the gentlemen were one and all pleased with Davie's readiness to fall into their views and give their schemes pecuniary support. Every one of them was prepared to let him have a hunter for half its value, and support his election to the County Clubs; and they began to beg the pleasure of drinking wine with him before the first cover was removed.

Lady Kestral charmed everyone with her sprightly wit, her courtly grace, and affability, and completely eclipsed my Delia, who

was unworthily neglected, as it seemed to me ; for sure, her modest fancies and simple manners were far more admirable than all the studied art and modish attainments of my aunt. But my Delia seemed to desire no other homage than I paid her; and though I was at first vexed to find all eyes and ears turned to my aunt, I quickly forgot my jealousy in the pleasure of having my sweetheart's undivided conversation.

It was not until at a signal from Miss Dobson she rose from the table, to my great regret, and left the room with the rest of the ladies, that I bethought me of Mr. Bond and my promise to Lord Kestral. Glancing then down the table, I perceived the young man seated at the farther end still busy with his plate.

‘Come, gentlemen, draw together, and let the bottle pass,’ said Davie cheerfully.

There was a general movement, in which

I contrived to change my place, and take a seat upon the right of Mr. Bond; Lord Kestral was seated on his left.

‘I am telling Mr. Bond about the old times, George,’ said my uncle, leaning back and speaking across the round shoulders of his step-son, who now had his arms on the table and was fingering his wine-glass; ‘in your mother’s time, you know, twenty or five-and-twenty years ago. That was before your father fell ill; you were quite a youngster then. At that time your father was fond of society, and many a pleasant gathering I’ve seen in this very room. I have tried in vain to recognise a familiar face here.’

‘With Borbonius, my lord,’ said Drench, in his most professional tone, speaking from the other side of the table, ‘we must say, “Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.”’

‘Very true, sir; “mutamur in illis,”

just so,' said my uncle. 'You know this part of Kent well, sir?'

'I should, my lord, for I have practised in it for the last twenty years.'

'I hope that has nothing to do with the disappearances of Lord Kestral's former acquaintances, doctor,' said Mr. Rogers, who sat beside Drench.

Lord Kestral professed to be hugely tickled by the joke, and the conversation became general amongst us four; but Randolph Bond remained silent, and hung over his glass, casting his sluggish eyes occasionally up the table towards Davie, and, as it seemed to me, giving his sole attention to what was going forward there. The wine was good, and the country gentlemen showed their appreciation of it by drinking deeply. Davie himself drank freely. There was a great deal of toasting, and everyone's tongue was wagging save young Bond's, though he

drank his full share of the port, and more.

‘Trouble you for the bottle,’ was all he said, and these words were usually accompanied with a scowl at me or Lord Kestral, who had removed it from his side. It was not long before he saw that we were trying to put a check upon him, and this he showed by emptying his glass more frequently and demanding the wine in a querulous insolent tone. Drinking, which excited others, seemed only to render him more sullen and heavy. ‘The more drunk he gets the safer he will be,’ thought I; and I made no further attempt to keep him sober.

After-dinner talk amongst men is scarcely ever brilliant, and to me that afternoon it seemed more stupid and inane than usual. The ladies had left the drawing-room and gone into the garden; the sound of their voices and light laughter came through the

open windows. I looked at Randolph : his head was lower over his glass ; I could not see his eyes. I fancied he was completely besotted, and might with safety be left. Besides, it was clear he would get drunk as he chose. Then I looked at Davie, and thought that the sooner he left the table the better it would be for him. If I moved, perhaps he would move also, and so break up the bout. With this thought I was on the point of moving back my chair, when suddenly Randolph called out in his shrill, high voice :

‘ You are mighty generous, Mr. Adams !’

I believe Davie had been promising to contribute to the building of an almshouse, a school, an orphanage—I had not caught which—it may have been all three.

‘ You’re mighty generous, Mr. Adams,’ he squealed again in a still higher pitch, finding that his first observation had not

stilled the babble at the upper end of the table.

There was a moment or two of silence, in which the gentlemen at the upper end looked down towards us, wondering maybe who it was who spoke, for the little wretch had not changed his position, but with his arms sprawled on the table hung over his wine. But his face was turned towards Davie, who, catching sight of the reptile eyes fixed on him, half rose from his chair, and said :

‘Is it you who spoke to me?’

‘Yes,’ replied Randolph. ‘Don’t you know me? I’m Randolph Bond, son of Bond, the silversmith, of Lombard Street, who died at Southgate ten years ago, and left a million of money behind him. He died without a will, and I’m his only son, and I haven’t a penny to bless myself with.’

‘Hold your tongue, sir!’ cried Lord Kestral, shaking him by the arm.

He took no notice of this command, but keeping his eyes steadily fixed on Davie, continued :

‘I’ll tell you why I haven’t a penny. ’Tis because my father’s fortune was stolen by a thief of a servant named Davie.’

The wine had taken away Davie’s self-command. He stood at the head of the table, trembling with anger, and unable to find words for his surging thoughts. His visitors looked from him to Randolph, and back again to him, expecting some explanation of this unaccountable behaviour. Randolph laughed harshly, emptied his glass, and put out his hand to get at the bottle. I pushed it away.

‘Bring me a bottle of wine, you fellow!’ he called to the servant.

‘Do nothing of the sort!’ cried Davie.

‘Bring me a bottle of wine, I say!’ repeated Randolph, at the top of his voice. ‘It is mine; I have a right to every cursed thing in this house. The very coat on your confounded back is mine,’ he shook his finger at Davie, ‘for ’twas bought with the money you stole from your master—you stole—you, Davie Adams, my father’s gardener!’

He screamed something else, but his words were inarticulate, for I had risen, and having hold of his neckcloth and the collar of his coat, was dragging him out of his chair.

‘Wait!’ cried Davie. ‘Let him stay, Mr. Falkland. He shall know the rights of this matter. The poor fool is less to blame than those who have set him on to this. Gentlemen all, he has told you that he is the son of Mr. Bond, the silversmith, and that he is entitled to all that I possess. He has been told so, and he believes it; he

knows no better, but nevertheless it is a lie. That young man is the——'

Davie stopped abruptly. His face, which had flushed with anger, lost colour ; a look of shame came into his eyes, and he dropped his chin upon his breast in silence.

I had seen his glance turn suddenly from Randolph Bond to some object beyond, the moment before he ceased to speak ; and now, as I turned round, I saw standing by the open door Lady Kestral, and by her side Delia, gazing in terrified astonishment at this strange scene.





## CHAPTER II.

DAVIE IS DESERTED BY HIS FRIENDS.

**F**ORQUITTED Randle, by whose side I was standing, and hastened to the door with the hope of getting Delia from the room before he could add to Davie's humiliation by repeating his charge in her presence. Drench and Mr. Rogers rose from the table at the same moment, and together we took the ladies out into the air.

'I'll go back and see fair play : 'tis all against one, or I'm mistaken,' Drench whispered when we were on the terrace ; and he fell back and re-entered the house.

‘What is the matter, dear?’ Delia asked of me, in a tone of suppressed inquietude.

‘Mr. Bond is tipsy, and has misbehaved himself: are you surprised?’

‘No! But papa! I never before saw him look as he did when he saw us and ceased to speak. ’Twas as if he had been in fault.’

‘He lost his temper: a man’s always ashamed of that. He was in fault—and felt it, seeing you—to be moved to such a degree by the pitiful insults of a contemptible boy like Randolph Bond.’

She accepted the explanation; but I saw that she was still sorely perplexed.

Lady Kestral treated the matter in a light off-hand manner.

‘Miss Adams and I have succeeded in bringing off two gentlemen,’ said she, when we joined the group of ladies upon the lawn, ‘and we must make much of them, for we are likely to get none other for some

time. Our husbands are in their cups, and seem vastly amused with their own company.'

Voices were raised in the dining-room, Randle's shrill squeak sounding above the rest. I glanced towards the house, and saw Drench close the windows; Delia looked at me in alarm.

Mr. Rogers, to divert attention from the house, proposed that we should explore the little wood beyond the paddock, and Lady Kestral giving her voice in favour of the expedition, the rest of the ladies agreed to it very readily.

As we were moving from the lawn, Randle's voice, which we had not heard since the closing of the window, became more distinctly audible than before; and all eyes turned again towards the house. Randle was being led out of the house between two men-servants, by the side-door.

We saw him as he descended the steps turn his head and gesticulate violently, and heard him screaming abuse at the top of his voice, though happily the distance rendered his words indistinct to our ears. The men who grasped his arms were big fellows, and he had to run to keep pace with their long strides.

‘Naughty boy!’ said Lady Kestral, with mock gravity. ‘Does he not look as if he were going to be flogged?’

‘’Tis your ladyship’s son, I fear,’ said a lady.

‘Yes, I am sorry to say it is my son. He has made himself objectionable, no doubt; and Mr. Adams is right to put him out of the house. ’Tis what you yourself would do, madam, in similar circumstances. Come, don’t let his unruly behaviour interfere with our enjoyments.’

‘A servant is coming this way: he seems to have a message for one of us.’

It was the butler.

‘Lady Kestral,’ he said.

My aunt moved, and inclined her head.

‘Lord Kestral bade me inform your ladyship that he attends you in the drawing-room.’

Lady Kestral inclined her head again, turned to the ladies with raised eyebrows and an expressive shrug of her shapely shoulders, and then, with a very gracious bow of acknowledgment, took Mr. Rogers’s arm and left us.

It was agreed that we should await the return of Lady Kestral and Mr. Rogers, and so we seated ourselves upon the lawn and struggled to appear as if we were not curious to know what was going on in the house.

The butler was met upon the terrace by another servant, received a message, and

returned to us with his slow and ceremonious air.

‘Mrs. and Miss Humphrey.’

‘Here—here we are; I am Mrs. Humphrey.’

‘Mr. Humphrey attends you in the drawing-room.’

‘Tut, tut, tut! What can it be? Something’s to do, I’m positive. I expected it, I protest. Come along, Jane. You know your father doesn’t like to be kept a-waiting.’ And away she bustled.

Again we made a feeble attempt to treat the affair as a matter of course. In Delia’s presence no doubt of her father’s culpability could be expressed; but the silence of these good ladies showed that they did not view the ejection of Randle and the departure of Davie’s most important guests with unreserved indifference. Everyone was seated with an eye towards the house. Mr. Rogers returned to us, and seating himself by

Delia. continued the conversation he had begun with her. He was a man who professed to care not for women, and who undoubtedly disliked talking to them; but now, with a kindly feeling and gentlemanly tact which it pleases me to recall, he devoted himself to my poor sweetheart and lessened her embarrassment by recounting a long-winded story of his experiences as a student in Rome, which at another time he would have detested himself for mentioning. Very different was his behaviour from that of Drench, who proved himself a time-server and a sycophant at this time; for he was the first to leave the house after Randle Bond—walking off with his hat over his eyes, as if he were suddenly called to attend a patient in the last agonies.

Everyone saw him go, and significant glances and whispered comments were exchanged amongst the ladies.

The butler came again, and all ears were expectant.

‘Mrs. Bagginwold, and Mrs. and Miss Shotter——’

He was not called upon to deliver his message. The ladies rose at the mention of their names, and sped towards the house.

Then the carriages began to arrive at the side-entrance. First of all the great family coach of Mr. Humphrey, as I learnt from the sufficiently audible whispers of the neighbouring ladies, in which Lady Kestral took the first place, Mrs. and Miss Humphrey following, and Lord Kestral and Mr. Humphrey completing the load.

Mr. Rogers still sawed away at his interminable story, but I saw Delia’s eyes turned towards the carriage, and knew that she was taking to heart the significance of visitors leaving without a word of farewell to her.

The butler advanced once more, and this time pronounced a string of names that seemed to comprise the whole company, except the triad composed of Delia, Mr. Rogers, and me ; for the ladies rose in a body, and swept away without a single word to Delia. Two or three made her a stiff formal courtesy, which was more irritating than the absolute disregard of the rest.

Delia's brows contracted, her delicate nostrils whitened, and her fine eyes sparkled with anger.

'If my father's guests are leaving,' she said, rising and interrupting the monologue of Mr. Rogers, 'I must not remain here. The discourtesy shall not lie on our side.'

'Stay where you are, dear,' said I, for I feared lest she should get to know the cause of the quarrel.

She looked at me in hesitation, and then, in obedience to my wish, which was now

her law, she sat down; but not without remonstrance.

‘What has taken place that I should be treated in this manner by those people?’ she asked.

‘Nothing very remarkable,’ said I. ‘Your father has very properly punished the insolence of a visitor by having him put out of the house; but because the visitor chances to be connected with a peer, the rest of the visitors, in unworthy respect for his position, have sided with him, and taken up his quarrel with your father.’

‘I cannot understand anyone with right feeling doing that,’ said Delia, whose intelligence was not to be deceived by such a lame explanation.

‘Greater quarrels have arisen from smaller causes,’ said Mr. Rogers; and he cited many wars of ancient and modern history to show how irrational and unjust

men can be whose judgment is perverted by feeling.

He offered her his arm, and we led her from the spot, he continuing his tedious disquisition, and I supporting him to the best of my ability, which I admit was slight enough ; for to talk about nothing at any time is a polite art acquired, I imagine, by long experience of society, and I had lived best part of my life in solitude. I believe Delia understood not one word that fell upon her ear ; and for my own part, the coming and going of carriages over the freshly gravelled drive and the slamming of doors occupied my mind much more than all the wars that ever were waged.

At length the banging and grinding ceased, and I thought we might safely enter the house ; so we turned about, and going by the avenue of larches, reached the lawn.

A servant mounted on a sorrel nag waited by the steps at the west entrance, and Davie, holding a packet in his hand, was giving him instructions.

The servant took the packet, touched his hat, and clapping his heels against the nag's sides, started off at a trot.

There was an embrasure in the garden wall, approached by a couple of steps, from which one could see a long stretch of the weald; and here I suggested we should sit down awhile, and enjoy the setting of the sun, for it seemed an inopportune moment to meet Davie. I felt sure that the packet given to the servant contained the papers of Lord Kestral and Randle Bond which Davie had threatened to hand over to Mr. Cohen, and guessed that Davie, to put his threat into execution with such despatch, must still be in choler.

Delia sat for a moment looking absently

at the landscape, and then she turned her eyes towards the house.

Davie was walking alone on the terrace with dragging steps, his hands behind him, and his eyes upon the ground.

‘Stay here, dear, with your friend,’ said Delia, in a quavering voice. ‘Papa wants me.’

Her eyes were full of tears as she spoke; I saw her pause to wipe them away before leaving the yew walk, and then she gave her head a little shake, as if resolved to get rid of her emotion, and went with a sprightlier gait to join her father.

Indeed, it touched my heart with melancholy to see Davie walking there dejected and alone, deserted by every friend, and with all his hopes and pleasant anticipations changed for despair and the consciousness of failure; and the place so silent and void where but a few hours before a crowd of

gaily dressed ladies and gentlemen surrounded their hospitable host, pleased with his simple manners, and joining heartily in his kindly merriment.

A tinkling sound caught my ear, and looking upwards among the boughs of the tree, I perceived that it arose from the evening breeze swinging against each other a couple of those 'additional lamps' which Davie had provided for the evening's entertainment. They seemed to be sporting with his misfortune, I thought.





## CHAPTER III.

### A FORESHADOWING OF DISHONOUR.

‘**A**RE they all gone?’ asked a voice from the lane.

Looking down from the wall, I espied Drench.

‘Yes,’ said I; ‘when one rat runs out of a sinking ship the rest are not long in following.’

‘Well, I’m the first to come back again,’ said he, laying hold of the top of the wall, and drawing himself up. ‘What, Falkland, will you quarrel with me for going, when I must either have sided with that d——d old

vagabond, your uncle, or lost my practice by staying. A country doctor can't afford to be heroic. Besides, what good could I have done—curse that stone wall! it has barked my shin finely—by staying? Everyone was against poor Adams, and all were too bemused to see more than one side of the question. Hang me if I know what I could have said either, in his defence! Hang and drat that wall,' he added, carefully looking at his damaged shin.

‘What happened?’

‘When I got back to my seat, I found Adams sitting in dead silence, and looking as glum as a gib-cat. The men were whispering to each other, evidently surprised that he did not attempt to complete his justification, or accusation, whichever it was he had begun. He took no notice of the murmurs, but sat there with his hands before him, looking at your uncle as if ’twas

his turn to play. Kestral had his young bear down in a chair again, and was threatening him—I'll swear he was! It seemed as if the cloud was to blow over without any further storms; the bottle began to move again. I ventured to make a general remark, and Squire Humphrey was about to reply, when our young cub, shoving his head forward, began again :

“ You were about to tell us why I am not entitled to my father's estate,” he squealed. “ I should like to know, for it can't make my affairs worse, that's certain ; so out with it, if you're not afraid, Adams.”

‘ Without replying to his request, Adams beckoned to a servant.

“ Take that person away,” said he ; “ put him outside the gates, and tell the lodge-keeper on no account to let him come within 'em again.”

‘ The little bear looked as if he meant

to show fight ; but those strapping fellows frightened him, and he confined himself to screaming out every kind of filthy abuse he could lay his tongue to as he was led away. Kestral shrugged his shoulders, and tried to make the best of it.

“ “ The boy has drunk too much ; he is mightily screwed. He should know how to hold his tongue. May I trouble you for the bottle?”

‘ This to me.

‘ I passed the bottle. Adams beckoned another servant.

“ “ Order Lord Kestral’s coach to be brought round,” said he, without dropping his voice from its usual pitch.

‘ You may imagine the sort of commotion this caused. Everyone began talking at once, but Adams took no notice ; he sat there lowering at your uncle in dogged silence. At length, when he had got over

his astonishment, up jumps Kestral, and everyone became silent.

“You have sent for my coach, Mr. Adams; do you intend an insult?” he asked.

“No,” answers Adams; “I insult no one. But I wish you to go. That is but fair, for you are more to blame than the drunken boy whose dismissal you approve of.”

“I shall not discuss that point with you,” says my lord, turning on his heel, and bidding a servant go find his lady.

“Wait, my lord,” cries Squire Humphrey—a stupid old fool who must be dipping his finger into every pie; begad, I’ll dose him for this turn! “Wait,” says he. “If you leave this table, my lord, I leave it with you, unless Mr. Adams can justify his conduct.”

“Nothing can be much easier if our host is in the right,” says old Shotter, a Justice of the Peace, and about as witty as most of ’em.

“Does Mr. Adams deny that he owes his present estate to the fortune left by the late Mr. Bond, silversmith?”

““No,” said Adams.

““Do you deny, sir, that the said Mr. Bond died intestate?”

““He left a will bequeathing every penny of his fortune to me,” says Adams reluctantly.

““And that will can be seen at Doctors’ Commons, sir?”

““No; it is in this house.”

““So much the better. All you have to do is to show it, and clear yourself of a nasty charge, and I promise you I won’t leave your port.”

“Adams made no reply; just set his elbow on the table and dropped his jaw on his hand—like that—and waited.

““Well, sir,” said Squire Humphrey, “will you be good enough to show one of us—

Lord Kestral, for instance--this will? He assures me 'tis all he demands."

"I have already refused to show it to him," says Adams, without lifting his head.

"And you will show it to no one else?"

Adams was silent for a good minute; then, lifting his head and looking at Squire Humphrey, he answered as quickly as you please :

"No!"

"Then, sir," says old Shotter, as he tossed off his glass, "I can no longer sit at your table." And he got up and followed Squire Humphrey, who had sent for his wife and daughter, and was marching out of the room arm-in-arm with old Kestral. Then everyone rose and formed a procession; and the last I saw of poor Adams, he was sitting at the head of his empty table with his jaw on his hand again, and his eyes on the table-cloth.'

‘And you hadn’t the courage to go and sit down by his side?’ I asked.

‘Oh, I had the courage; but I hadn’t the imprudence. Why, man, if we were all of your kidney, we should have nothing to do but to go about begging charity. I shall be as stiff as an old horse to-morrow. What on earth could I do, I should like to know? I’m altogether of his side in my heart. Whether there’s a will or not, the money’s better in his hands than the young bear’s—though precious little he’d get of it if Kestral should be his guardian. Adams did right, any way, to feather his own nest. I’ll go and have a chat with him at once—d——that stone!’

‘I pity that sweet girl with all my heart,’ said Mr. Rogers, when we were alone; Drench having limped off to the terrace, where Davie was still walking with Delia upon his arm. ‘She must hear of it sooner

or later, and whether her father be innocent or guilty, the effect upon her mind will be terrible. I suppose there's no hope that this story about the existence of a will has a foundation on fact ?

‘ Good God ! do you think I should be here now if I thought otherwise ? ’

‘ Hum ! After that I ought to follow the rest of Mr. Adams's visitors, and go ; for my question implies my doubt. Truth to tell, I'm almost as worldly as your friend Drench. I can forgive Adams for not letting the money go to such a cub as that. I fancy you yourself, Falkland, believe in his honesty rather from inclination than conviction. All that pother about independence shows that you had some unacknowledged doubts which made the acceptance of his money repellent to you. ’

‘ No ! ’ said I. ‘ I have never doubted Davie's honesty ; and I doubt it no more,

now that you have suggested a bias in my judgment, than I did before.'

'You believe, in fact, this statement reported by Drench, that Adams possesses a will entitling him to the estate.'

'Yes.'

'Then how can you explain his concealment of it?'

'I believe it contains an explanation of the circumstances that led Mr. Bond to cut off his widow from the inheritance—an explanation damaging to her honour; and that Adams, to shield her from public shame, suppresses it.'

'Rather romantic,' said Mr. Rogers, raising his eyebrows, and smiling incredulously.

'It is,' said I warmly; 'Davie Adams is a little behind us in point of enlightenment.'

'I suppose one must be something of a barbarian to be romantic—that's true. It

would seem vastly incongruous for a man with a large circle of pleasant acquaintances, the pleasures of the town within his reach, and books and pictures to fall back upon, to die of a broken heart, or to sacrifice all that is dear to him for the happiness of a friend. Yet it would be reasonable enough in the case of a man like Adams—a man of simple tastes and slender mental resources, who takes as long to mature one idea as we should give to a hundred. If you could see into his mind, and were to examine it twenty times in a day, or once in a year. I have no doubt you would find always the same object of contemplation there.’

‘Then you will allow the possibility of his concealing the will for this woman’s sake, even at the risk of encountering shame for himself?’

‘Yes; if he loved her. Do you think that your aunt has fascinated him?’

‘I believe he pities her—that’s all. He may have loved her at one time.’

‘Do you think he loves her more than he loves his daughter?’

‘Good heavens! what an idea!’ said I, laughing.

‘Does he love her better than his daughter?’ he repeated.

‘Why, can’t you see,’ cried I, ‘that he worships the very ground which Delia treads! She is all the world to him.’

‘I thought so,’ replied Mr. Rogers quietly. ‘Then you may depend upon it the will does not exist. For however romantic he may be, Adams is not a fool, and to save his daughter from unhappiness and the shadow of his own dishonour, he would produce that will though it ruined ten thousand women like Lady Kestral.’

‘The shadow of dishonour!’ I exclaimed, catching at the phrase—for it was the first

time I had ever thought of my Delia sustaining injury from the suspicion that rested on Davie—‘the shadow of dishonour! Whatever the consequences of Davie’s conduct may be, his daughter cannot be implicated.’

‘Of course not,’ he replied evasively. ‘You misunderstand me, Falkland;’ and then he proceeded to argue that Davie’s love for his daughter might have led him to appropriate the money; but I could not follow him, for I was busy ruminating upon the consequences to Delia of Davie’s conduct.





## CHAPTER IV.

HOW RANDLE CAME TO BE THRASHED.

**W**E met at the supper-table, and everyone tried to act and look as if nothing had happened. It was a poor pretence, for Davie could by no effort throw off his care, and was dismal to the last degree ; and it was a relief to all of us when the time came to separate for the night.

I was up betimes the following morning, divining that Delia would like to see me early. The servants were not yet risen, but I found the little door opening upon

the terrace ajar ; and going out into the air, I perceived, at a distance, Delia walking with her father down the larch avenue in the direction of the woods. I overtook them, and we strolled together round the wood, returning to the avenue, and so slowly approaching the house. Delia looked pale and fatigued ; Davie seemed only concerned for her. I could fancy that in the night he had taken himself to task for giving way to unavailing emotions, and determined to do his best to make the burden of misfortunes lighter for Delia. He talked quite volubly for him, keeping his eye on the alert for anything that might please the girl. Now it was a squirrel that he pointed out, and now a magpie ; and here was a wild strawberry, and there some sweet thyme ; and all recalled to his mind facts and circumstances that he told in a kindly, genial manner, with a certain anxiety in his look

and tone as if he were entreating her to find happiness and contentment in such things as fate could not deprive her of. Delia was responsive ; every common flower and paltry herb he culled, she admired ; and she smiled when it was clear he wanted her to smile. She too, poor soul—as I found—had resolved to make the best of it, and be brave.

The grass was damp, so we walked by the path at the bottom of the lawn by the balustrade, and admired the look of the house, with its red-brick façade, its twisted chimneys, and quaint ornaments. There was a warm, cheerful look about it, and the sunlight sparkling on the little panes of glass made it seem to smile at us.

I think I have mentioned that among the embellishments given to the place by Davie, was a short flight of broad steps of white marble, which formed a descent from the terrace to the lawn. Now, as I looked

towards the house, my eye was caught by what seemed a black stain upon the surface of the lower step. The position and distance prevented me from seeing more. It was a trifle, but it excited my curiosity. Turning to Davie, I found that he also was regarding it with a look of perplexity, and at the same moment Delia asked :

‘What can that be on the steps?’

‘That’s just what’s puzzling my pate,’ said Davie. ‘You stop here, dear—the grass is mighty wet—and I’ll go across and find out.’

We stopped in the path while he marched across the grass, and approached the mysterious stain. Suddenly, at about a dozen paces from the steps, he stopped short, as if he had been struck a blow. He stood silent and motionless for a minute, and then he turned quickly to the right and to the left, as if in search of some one ; finally he called

aloud to Bishop, the gardener, who was taking down the little lamps from the trees.

‘Let us cross and see what it is. My shoes are quite thick,’ said Delia; and with an apprehension of mischief which Davie’s altered tone produced, we crossed the lawn. Within a yard of him we also stopped abruptly, for we read this word, painted in great black letters on the white stone:

‘THEEF.’

Delia trembled as she hung upon my arm. I knew then that she had learnt of the charge against her father. We did not speak. Davie did not turn to look for us; we were forgotten. We waited in anxiety while the gardener slowly plodded, in the manner of gardeners, over the lawn in obedience to his master’s summons.

‘Who did that?’ asked Davie, pointing to the step.

‘Goo’ Goramighty!’ exclaimed Bishop, screwing up his eyes, and drawing near. ‘It’s pitch letters, too, sir. T-H-E-E-F, thief! Goramighty!’

‘Who did it, I say?’ said Davie, more angrily than before.

Bishop looked up at him in blank astonishment, and then, turning his round eyes askant at the steps, he shook his head, rubbed his hands slowly on his breeches, and replied in a subdued voice:

‘I d’n’ know, sir, for sartin sure!’

‘Then you must find out; and there’s ten guineas for you if you find out before noon.’

‘They’re a-pitchin’ the pales at Grigsby’s, as I happened to see only yesterday morning as I was passin’; and like enough it’s clever Jollocks, which is a daring young hound as knows the stocks as well as e’er a drunken tinker in the county. I’ll have him—a young toad!’

Davie turned away, and, dropping his head, he said bitterly :

‘ They *won’t* leave me alone !’

Bishop went off with the under-gardener, who was to play the part of false witness, in order to ensnare clever Jollocks into confession ; and so well did the two execute their plan that in the course of an hour they returned to the hall, bringing the culprit with them, black-handed. It had required very little bounce to make him confess, but he prudently reserved his defence. He was taken into the library, and there Davie and I found him, with his hat in his hand, standing in an attitude of submission, which showed that he was not unaccustomed to the ways of justice, and quietly noticing all that was going forward out of the corners of his sly eyes.

‘ Did you paint those letters on my steps ?’ asked Davie.

‘Guilty, your worship.’

‘When did you do it?’

‘Half-past three this morning, your worship.’

‘And why did you do it?’

‘I was paid to do it, your worship.’

‘Who paid you?’

Clever Jollocks, who had answered glibly enough up to this, now held his tongue; and upon the question being repeated, replied in a snuffling whine :

‘Better put me in the stocks at once, your worship.’

‘The person who paid you to do this sorry trick is to be punished, not you,’ said Davie.

‘Don’t you hear, Jollocks?’ asked the gardener, after waiting a few moments for the youth to speak. ‘The master don’t want to set you in the stocks ; he’ll let you off if you tell un who egged you on.’

‘Put me in the stocks,’ snuffled the culprit.

‘Lazy young toad! ’tis no punishment to you to be set in the stocks. You’d rather sit there a whole day than do an hour’s work.’

‘Well,’ said Davie, ‘if he prefers to take the punishment, he shall have it. Go and cut me a stout hazel.’

The second gardener left the room to execute the order.

Clever Jollocks seemed unmoved by the prospect of a thrashing. He kept his head down in silence, and the expression of his face did not alter.

‘He’s got a hide,’ whispered Bishop to us, after looking at him for some time in disgust—‘he’s got a hide like a bit o’ leather. Might as well thrash a gatepost.’ Then, turning to the hopeless subject again, he asked, in such a tone as he might have used

to an unmanagable horse: 'Why won't you tell the master who 'twas as set you on—eh?'

'Cause the gent's going to give me a shilling to-night, if he's not found out,' replied clever Jollocks readily.

'Ah! I thought so!' growled Bishop. 'Well, if I give you these three sixpenny-bits, will you open your mouth?'

A faint smile broke over the youth's face, and he replied, with a gayer kind of snuffle:

'You give 'em to me, and see if I don't.'

Bishop put the money in his hand, whereupon he at once informed us that it was a fine young gentleman who had put up at the inn last night, who had paid him to paint the letters on the step.

'Can you show him to me?' asked Davie.

'If so be he ain't gone, your worship.'

'You shall have a crown if he isn't,' cried Davie, springing up from his chair.

‘A crown!’ exclaimed the lad with unwonted animation; ‘then I wager I’ll find him if he’s anywhere within five miles.’

Davie clapped on his hat, and we went out of the house. Delia was waiting in anxious suspense near the door. I went to her, and told her what had happened. We agreed that the fine young gentleman must be Randolph Bond.

‘And what is papa going to do with him?’ she asked, in alarm.

‘I should think he is going to thrash him,’ said I.

Hearing this, Delia was filled with womanly dread, and begged me to go and stand by her father; and though I pointed out that he alone was more than a match for a dozen such feeble creatures as Randolph, and had, moreover, the support of Mr. Rogers and the gardener, she would not be persuaded that I was not needed; and so, to set her

mind at rest, I started in pursuit of Davie.

I had a good run to catch up with them, for Davie's strides were as long as one and a half of an ordinary man's; within a stone's-throw of the inn I caught sight of him striding ahead of the party, with the stick in his hand which the second gardener had cut for clever Jollocks's back.

He went directly into the inn by the front door, followed by Mr. Rogers; but the gardener and clever Jollocks, more wary, went round to the back of the house, whence there presently arose such a hubbub as is heard in a barn when the thrashers catch sight of a rat they are hunting for.

I reached the spot at the same time that Davie, making his way through the house, arrived; and there, in the middle of the muck-yard, we found the two gardeners and clever Jollocks kneeling on Randolph Bond,

who, half buried in the rotten straw and filth, was gasping for breath. Had they been ringing a stout boar they could scarcely have exerted more strength to keep him down.

‘I caught un, your worship—I caught un!’ cried clever Jollocks; ‘was a-tryin’ to sneak out by the hop-halm, but I see’d un, and I caught un.’

‘Get off him!’ said Davie.

The three men obeyed, and Randolph lay in the filth, looking up at Davie with the most terror-stricken expression I have ever seen on mortal face.

‘Get up!’ said Davie to him.

He drew himself on his hands and knees, and rose to his feet; and a pretty pickle he was in, to be sure—his fine silk stockings, his satin breeches, and handsome waistcoat and coat, being one-half saturated with the mire in which he had been plunged, and the

rest of his person and face being all smirched and befouled, and a sight to see. He whined some sort of apology or excuse, of which the words, 'Not my fault'—'Lord Kestral'—'I was drunk,' only were intelligible to my ear.

'I shall cure you of getting drunk and acting upon bad advice,' said Davie ; and with that he took the fellow by the collar, and held him up—though Randolph, seeing his intention, would fain have slipped down into the muck again—while he administered as sound a thrashing to him as ever man received ; nor did he cease to thrash him until his stick was all splintered and broke to pieces.

'There!' said he, throwing the end of the stick aside and dropping Randolph, howling, upon the litter, 'I've done with you ; but mark me well—I shall begin again if you give me cause!'

‘ Lord Kestral shall know of this!’ cried Randolph.

‘ Let him know!’ retorted Davie; ‘ and tell him at the same time that if he were ten years younger I would serve him in the same fashion.’





## CHAPTER V.

### OF DELIA'S TROUBLE.

**D**ELIA met us in the lane as we were returning to the Hall, her sweet countenance full of solicitude for her father. But Davie was once more tender and cheerful : in thrashing Randolph he had given a free outlet to all his ill-humours, and maybe the mere exercise had done him good. I think we were all inclined to be gay—except Delia, to whom it was an effort to appear careless—for though the pleasure be somewhat brutal, it is nevertheless a pleasure that most English-

men experience to see a sneaking scoundrel well thrashed.

In the afternoon Mr. Rogers took a saddle-horse and left us to pay a visit to his friend Mr. Talbot, at Sevenoaks, promising to return to us at nightfall ; and Davie inviting me to a bout of bowls, we went to the green and there played a very agreeable game—Delia sitting hard by and keeping the score. Men in good health are somewhat like coaches in good condition : an upset, at first sight, seems to have done their business for ever ; but with little difficulty they are righted, and so continue their journey at the old jog-trot, with but few marks to be found of their late disaster. But it is quite otherwise with women. And so a stranger, seeing us at our game, might never have guessed of the tumult in which we had lately played a part ; but could not have looked at Delia without perceiving the

signs of late distress. Let it not be supposed that I was light-hearted. I must have been callous indeed to have felt unconcerned, with my sweetheart looking so wan and weary. She pretended an interest in the game, but it was clearly a pretence, for her score was ridiculously out ; and now and then I caught sight of her in a moment of abstraction, when she thought we were occupied, looking inexpressibly sad.

While we were yet playing, there came the London carrier with six boxes containing the prepared clay I had ordered a week before. This was a welcome event, both to Davie and me, for it afforded us the hope of distracting Delia's thoughts from the present troubles, and cheering her with the prospect of that work which was to make us man and wife. So we threw down our bowls, took Delia between us, and calling the gardeners, set them to carrying the heavy

boxes into our fine new study, where they were presently split, and the clay taken out of its cloths and turned into the trough which had been made to receive it.

‘Bravo!’ cried Davie; ‘I long to see you both at it, Delia in her white apron and her plain, close dress—you never looked prettier in anything, dear, than in that—and with that serious working look of hers; and you, Mr. Falkland, scraping and digging by her side, or scanning her work, proudly as I see you often in that little tumble-down woodshed. Bodikins! you’ll be better here. I declare it looks quite smart,’ said he, looking round him, ‘with your stools and your steps, all nice and new—and the walls and windows clean and bright, and everything ready to your hand. I wager you’re itching to begin!’

I assented, and Delia smiled faintly as she bent over the modelling stool and

toyed with the wooden tools I had given her, and which she treasured beyond everything.

• You'll be able to use your right arm a little, hey, Mr. Falkland? It seems to be getting better apace. Well, I own I'm a'most as anxious as you to see the work begun. I see no reason why you shouldn't go at it to-morrow morning, you and Delia. Early to bed to-night, and early up to-morrow. We might take breakfast at seven, then you can commence straight off at eight. And p'raps you wouldn't mind my sitting down on the bench a bit and looking on, for I can assure you there's nothing in the world could so delight me. Just to see the thing growing up under your hands—every hour drawing nearer and nearer to perfection, and to mark you at your work, Delia, so ardent and serious, as well you may be, for 'tis a noble and a grand thing, I take it, Mr.

Falkland,' he continued, turning to me, 'for a young woman to see the true meaning of her life, and the faculties she has, and to strive patiently to do the work intended for her well. And then what a joy to her to work with the man she loves, and help him to fame! 'Tis wondrous, to be sure,' he added, in a tone of awe, as he turned about and looked at the clay which at that moment I was covering with a cloth. 'Tis wondrous to think that this shapeless mass of earth may make you famous.'

'Ay!' cried I joyfully, 'and more than that, Davie, it will make us happy for all our days to come!'

There was a faint moan, and as I turned about quickly—for it was Delia's voice I heard—I saw the sweet girl reel for a moment, and then fall to the ground as if she had been stabbed to the heart.

I shall not attempt to describe my

emotions as I fell on my knees beside my darling, and raised her lifeless head from the ground. The living tints had gone from her face—even her lips were colourless ; her features looked set and hard, as if they were moulded in wax ; her brow was cold as marble to my lips. In my terror I thought that she was dead ; and for a moment Davie and I knelt there speechless, motionless—ourselves almost deprived of life. Then came the hope of bringing life back again to that beloved body, and while Davie rushed off to the house for restoratives and assistance, I bathed her face and temples with my cravat soaked in water, using my right arm as if there had been naught amiss with it.

I believe I cried with joy when signs of life appeared in Delia's face. She opened her eyes, and looked about her in amazement, and then, seeing the clay and the modelling stool, and the casts which during the last

week we had been arranging—it had been a prodigious source of pleasure to us—she seemed to recall what had occurred, and casting her arms about my neck, she burst into an agony of tears, kissing my lips and face 'twixt each convulsive sob. I did not then understand her passionate grief—did not imagine that the poor soul was with those kisses bidding farewell to me and all her dreams of happiness!

Davie took her up in his arms and carried her into the house; she went directly to her chamber, and I saw no more of her that day.

Drench, who had been sent for on the instant, came with his professional airs, talked a quantity of jargon that provoked me to such a pitch of impatience that I had much ado to restrain myself from telling him to his face that he was unfeeling, and no better than a charlatan, and would have

stayed by Delia's side had she not insisted upon his going. He revenged himself by sending half a dozen bottles of physic, all carefully sealed, and one protected from the light by a sheet of tin-foil.

Delia kept her room the following day.

Drench called early in the morning and again in the afternoon.

After this second visit, I followed him from the house, and twitching him by the sleeve as he was about to get into his gig, I begged to have a few words with him. We went into the side walk, and there I told him in plain terms that I took it very ill he should treat Delia's sickness as if it were of no more consequence than the fantastic complaint of a fashionable invalid.

'Well, what would you have of me, Falkland?' says he.

'I would have you lay aside your "epiphora" and laxations and nonsense,

and deal with the case honestly and clearly, as you should, seeing that it concerns the happiness of a man you are pleased to call your friend. Miss Adams would not keep her room unless something seriously affected her. Tell me in a word what is the matter with her.'

Drench was silent a moment, and then he said drily:

'Vapours.'

'What!' I cried; 'would you have me believe that she has nothing more serious than the complaint invented by fine ladies for a fashion?'

'Nothing.'

'Then what do you mean by dosing her with drugs?'

'Oh, there's nothing more deadly than peppermint, I assure you. Come, Falkland, you take an unfair advantage of your position. You first find fault with me as a

friend, and next as a physician. Which character am I to support?’

‘Both,’ said I. ‘Tell me fairly what ails my sweetheart, and I will believe you to be the best of friends and physicians.’

‘Then believe me nothing is radically the matter with Miss Adams. There’s not an organ whose function is imperfect, so far as my observation goes. But her mind is uneasy; she is fretting, and if her mind is kept uneasy, and she continues to fret, a real illness is likely to seize her. The liver will refuse to act, the digestion will get out of order, she will lose strength, and if she comes in the way of fever, or small-pox, or any other floating disease, she’ll take it. And now, to complete the business, I’ll tell you how you may cure her, for you’re the only one who can.’

I looked at him in surprise, and he, in reply to my mute inquiry, said:

‘Marry her, and that without any more d——d nonsense.’

I sat down in the embrasure of the wall where Drench left me, and there I stayed, dwelling upon what he had said, and looking at the matter this way and that, and as impartially as I could, until at length I had resolved upon the course I should take. Then I went into the house, and finding Davie alone, walking to and fro in the library, I took his arm, and we paced the room together, while I told him in a few words what was in my mind.

‘I have been speaking to Drench about Delia,’ said I.

‘I saw you at it,’ he replied, ‘but I dared not put any questions to you. Does he speak hopefully?’

‘He says she has no bodily ailment.’

‘God be praised for that! Clever man, that Doctor Drench. But, surely, sir, our

Delia would not stay away from us for nothing.

‘Drench thinks that her spirits are upset. She takes your troubles to heart. If we could make her forget them——’

‘Why, that’s what I was hoping this imaging business would do, sir; but it seems as if she’d gone off it, somehow. If it was possible to travel a bit now, ’twould do her a marvellous deal of good—Italy or Switzerland, for instance, where you can’t go a mile without expecting your calash to topple you over a precipice, and can’t sleep a wink for the fleas and fears of having your throat cut—that sort of pleasuring makes you forget your other troubles.’

‘I thought of Brighton for a week or two, or the Isle of Wight.’

‘Nothing in the world better—for enjoyment; but Lord, sir, how am I to get her away, or keep her away for a day, with the

thought of you and this clay job in her head? 'Twould seem to her like putting off your happiness so much longer—she'd never do it.'

'But supposing I marry her before we go? This trip would serve for our honeymoon, and we should come back to work with——'

'What, sir?' cried Davie, stopping and grasping my hand. 'You'll lay aside your pride and your independence, and all that? Well, I'm not surprised, for you do it for her sake, and 'tis but another proof of your love for her. Heart alive, sir, if you knew the joy this gives me! When once she is your wife, all the trouble will be over, and there'll be nought more to plague and worry us. Gad's my life! the dull hours are all gone, and the bright ones at hand. We'll be merry over this to-night. I'll send for Drench, Mr. Rogers will be here, and we four men will drink the bride-cup.'

‘Delia has not yet consented.’

‘In her heart she has, sir. I wager she has thought of such a possibility in that busy little head of hers ; and so be she hasn’t, ’tis no matter. Did you bid her jump from the top of the house, she’d do it with a smile.’

‘To-morrow, perhaps, she may come downstairs.’

‘To-morrow is too late by a day. Let me go out on the lawn, and send up a message by the maid that you would speak to her ; mark my words, sir, Delia will come to you on the instant.’

With that Davie went hurriedly from the room, and sent the maid to me, saying I had a message for her to carry to her mistress.



## CHAPTER VI.

### DELIA'S RESOLUTION.

**H**AVING despatched the maid with a message, I waited in great agitation of spirit for her reply. I could not hope to see her. I believed she was really ill, and that Drench was himself deceived, or purposely deceiving me as to her condition, for 'twas not in her nature to make ado about nothing, but rather to conceal her sufferings for fear of giving pain to those who loved her. She had learnt the sound of my footstep, and hitherto, when I walked upon the terrace, she being

in the room above, her window had quickly opened to my expectant wishes, and she appeared. But this day I had passed beneath her window a hundred times, and caught no single glimpse of her. I never suspected that she purposely avoided me, but rather that she was too ill to rise from her bed. Therefore, I was astonished when, a few minutes after sending my message, the door opened, and she herself appeared, just as Davie had prophesied.

That end of the room was dark, and I stood in the light, so in the first moment I could but see her white face, yet I was conscious that she did not smile, and she came towards me, not with her customary nimble step and arms outstretched, but with a heavy pace, and her hands hanging by her side.

I went quickly to her: I took her in my arms, and I kissed her forehead, for she had

dropped her chin upon her breast. She did not return my embrace nor the pressure of my hands when I took hers, but stood before me with her eyes upon the ground, silent and still.

‘Won’t you kiss me to-day, love?—won’t you look at me?’ I asked, in bewilderment.

She hesitated an instant; then she raised her eyes to mine with the mournfullest expression in them that ever it has been my unhappiness to see.

‘I want to speak to you, George,’ said she, with an effort to control the trembling of her lips. ‘Let us sit down.’ It was as if she had demanded this interview.

I took her to a chair, and drawing one close beside it, sat me down, mute with wonder.

‘I am glad you sent for me,’ said she, in

a low voice. 'I have been wanting to speak to you all day, but I could not find the courage.'

'And what is the grave matter you want to tell me about?' said I, assuming to be light-hearted, though God knows my heart wept as I looked at her dear face, so pale and careworn, and saw how her fingers did incessantly twine and twist together.

'I know all, George—I know what took place at the dinner-table after we left. I know why the visitors all left the house without bidding me good-bye.' She paused, and then, with a look of shame, added: 'Tis the talk of all the servants that my father is——'

She could go no further.

'That your father is accused of dishonesty?' said I, with a laugh. 'And what hen, you dear little goose? May not you

and I be wrongfully accused at any time? Is anyone safe against the arrows of slander? Who is it that accused your father? —a tipsy boy.'

'He was accused by everyone at the table. He said he could prove his innocence, but, being asked to produce the proof, he failed to do so.'

'And quite right, too. What! is an honourable man to satisfy the curiosity of a mob of bemused tipplers? Is he to defend himself against an absurd charge, as if he stood a criminal before the bar?'

'That is not it,' said Delia.

'Between you and me there need be no secret, Delia. I know by my aunt's confession that the proof of your father's innocence exists, and I know that it is to shield her from disgrace and the resentment of my uncle that he declines to show that proof. It is a long story.'

‘I know it,’ she said ; ‘Miss Dobson has told me.’

‘Then you can understand your father’s motive. He believes that the money was given to him that he might repair the cruelty of Mr. Bond towards his wife. Mrs. Bond by her own act defeated that end ; your father could not employ the money to her advantage ; but there remains, in his opinion, an unpaid debt, which he must discharge. He feels it his duty to screen her ; and gratitude to Mr. Bond, pity for Lady Kestral, and a chivalrous generosity, all combine to support him in doing that duty.’

‘That may be,’ she replied, after reflecting in silence for a space, during which I recalled Mr. Rogers’s observations, and conceived that she was considering the very objections he had raised. ‘He may not know how dependent my happiness is upon

his good fame, or he may deem it of less importance than his duty. That does not matter. If we had the proof here before our eyes, he would still be a thief in the opinion of the world.'

'What then?' I asked.

'What then!' she echoed, looking at me in astonishment. She ceased to twist her fingers, and her hands fell wide asunder.

'Surely,' I cried, with bated breath, as I caught at the significance of this unintended act; 'surely, you do not think that a reason for our separation.'

She had sometimes in idle moments asked me, with a witching smile, if I loved her; and now a faint reflection of that arch fond look stole over her face, and she said:

'Would you marry me though I were the daughter of a thief?'

'Aye, this very moment, were a clerk

here,' said I; and, catching up her hand, I pressed it to my lips and to my face.

'Oh, George, George, George!' she faltered, drawing away her hand; 'you make my duty hard to do.'

'Darling, I sent for you to ask if you would be my wife without further delay—' I stopped short with a woful sinking at my heart.

'Tis odd,' she replied dreamily. 'I never thought to ask why you sent for me, my mind was so full of what I have to say to you. 'Tis hard for me to speak the few words there are to say, though I have said nought else to myself these long, long hours but "George, we must part."'

I could not speak for a minute; then I cried in a passion:

'Is that what you have to say to me now?'

'Yes,' she replied, with quiet firmness; 'George, we must part.'

‘ You do not love me longer ! You could not say those words if you loved me.’

‘ Oh, George !’ she exclaimed, springing to her feet, and looking at me with indignant reproach ; ‘ could I say this if I did not love you more than I love myself ?’

‘ I was a fool to say that, and cruel as well,’ said I ; ‘ but I do think I am beside myself. Sit down again, Delia love ; we will look at this coolly. We are both agitated. Your dear face shows that you still suffer from your swoon.’

‘ No ; I am none the worse for that. I was never sick in my life, and I shall bear up under greater misfortunes than a swoon. My body will live without Dr. Drench’s care, and my heart is too stout to break, let it ache how it may. No, I will not sit down. I have found a little courage, and must make the most of it to say—good-bye.’

‘I will not say farewell,’ cried I ;  
‘ ’tis nonsense ! What does it matter  
what opinion the world has of your  
father?’

‘It may not matter to you. I believe  
you love me so well that you would still be  
gentle and kind to your wife, though every-  
one cried shame upon her. But it matters  
everything to me, and I will be an old maid  
till the end of my life, if it cannot be said  
“George Falkland did well to marry  
Delia.”’

‘That shall be said, though every word  
against your father is true. It shall be said  
“Delia has saved George Falkland from  
despair.”’

‘Oh ! do not tempt me to do wrong,  
George. Think that my life is not to end  
to-night, or in a month or in a year, but  
must be lived out for forty, maybe, fifty  
long years ; and help me to do well, that

my regrets may be tempered with the knowledge that I did right by the man who loved me.'

'Think of our hopes—of the plans we made in that shed as we worked——'

'I have thought of them,' she cried, the tears springing in her eyes. ''Tis worse than saying good-bye to think of them,' and she stopped short, and burst into tears, that trickled through her fingers as she held them to her eyes.

I cannot now think of my conduct without bitterly reproaching myself for the selfishness of it.

'Be generous!' I cried (how inconsistently may now appear). 'Set aside a strained scruple for my sake.'

She forced her tears to stop, and turning to me, her dear eyes blinded with weeping, she said in a voice yet choked with emotion:

‘It is not you alone of whom I think. If my father is a thief, and despised by all the world, I must stay by him and give him comfort. Good-bye.’

She held out her hand.

I know not what madness possessed me, but I would not take her hand, and turned away, impatiently crying that I should not say farewell.

The closing of the door brought me to my senses. I turned about, and found her gone. I called her name, and ran to the door, repenting of my passionate cruelty. The hasp caught; I turned and wrenched the handle this way and that way for a couple of minutes, without moving it. At length I got the door open and stepped forward.

Davie stood in the way.

‘Is it all settled?’ he said, with cheerful eagerness. ‘When’s it to be?’

‘Never!’ I cried, with a stamp of my foot, and looking at him with hatred for the first time, in my transport of disappointment and anger.





## CHAPTER VII.

### DAVIE RECEIVES A CHALLENGE.

‘**H**EAVENS alive, Mr. Falkland, sir! what’s to do?’ asked Davie, astonished—as well he might be—at my frenzy. ‘Pray tell me what you mean. Let us sit down and have it out, sir.’ He closed the door, and led me to a chair as though I were a sick man. ‘Come, sir, tell me what has happened. Surely Delia has not angered you thus. You do not mean to say that she is inconstant, hey, sir? That I cannot believe, for ’tis not in her nature to play fast and loose.’

It took no longer than the saying of these words for me to perceive how irrational, how selfish, and how cruel my conduct was ; and as I recalled to mind with what courage, devotion, and tenderness Delia had comported herself under conditions more trying by far than mine, I owned to myself with shame that I, a man, had less strength than she, a maid.

I now wished with all my heart that I had held my tongue, instead of blurting out the first word my passion prompted ; for how could I explain my word to Davie without telling him the cause, and how could I do that without adding to his sorrows and the unhappiness of dear Delia ? 'Twould be to him the cruellest blow of all to know that she had refused to marry me because of his fault.

‘ Come, sir,’ said he, after waiting a few moments for me to speak, ‘ there must be a

meaning in your word: tell it me, I pray you.'

'I have been reflecting on the suggestion I made,' said I, hammering out my words with difficulty ; 'and—and I see that I was over-hasty, and that—that the thing is impracticable.'

'Oh, indeed,' said he coldly, and with a suspicious glance.

'Yes ; and I feel sure that it would be better to carry out our earlier intention, and postpone all thoughts of marriage until I have secured an independent position. You see, I should absolutely have to borrow money of you to buy a license, which would be contrary to all my principles.'

'So, so !'

He nodded his head, looking at me askant with raised eyebrows.

'My arm has so recovered its strength that I think I may fairly hope to do good

work with it—alone. So there is no reason why you should not take Delia away for a change of air, with the hope that when you return we—we may be able to fix a date for the marriage.’

Then followed an awkward silence. I felt how absurd my excuse was, yet my invention failed to supply me with a better. After looking at the floor in sombre study for some time, Davie spoke.

‘You said “Never,” Mr. Falkland,’ said he.

‘I was beside myself with agitation.’

There was another awkward pause, in which he looked up from the floor to my face, and then down to the floor again.

‘I saw Delia leave the room,’ he said quietly. ‘Does she know this?’

I nodded assent.

‘And she agrees with you?’

I nodded again.

‘And she is willing to give up the plan of working with you. and go away with me?’

‘Yes.’

Again Davie was silent for a space, then after drawing a deep breath he said :

‘I should think you were deceiving me, sir, if I did not believe that you are my friend. May be I am wrong, Mr. Falkland, to believe that : tell me, sir, if I may still call you my friend?’

I held out my hand to him. He took it and wrung it, and still holding it, said :

‘Now, sitting hand to hand, and speaking as one man should speak to another, tell me the truth. Have you refused to marry Delia because she is my daughter?’

‘No,’ said I.

‘A little more, sir,’ said he, still grasping my hand, and looking me full in the face with his mild earnest eyes—‘a little

more. I'm getting toughened like by hard usage, and whether I have one cut more or less, or whether the smart is little or much, matters not in the long run. Come, sir, tell me fairly—was it not Delia who refused to marry you ?'

What could I answer but 'Yes' ? 'Twas useless, and it was impossible, to tell a downright lie.

He gave my hand a little shake, looking at me with the tears flooding his eyes, and then let it fall, and turned his face away.

'I might have known it,' he said, as if in soliloquy. 'One may see what she will do beforehand, by just thinking the matter over, and settling what's the noblest and best thing that could be done,' and then, facing about, he asked, with the utmost tenderness in his voice : 'Is she not beautiful in every way, sir ?'

I responded warmly, and he continued :

‘I did her injustice. I thought as you didn’t go with the rest, and were willing to marry her, she would agree to marry you, seeing how wonderful obedient she is to your wishes, and how she sets your judgment up over the Ten Commandments like : but I mistook her. She won’t marry you while she thinks she’s the daughter of a thief.’ He rasped his long jaw with his knuckles reflectively, clearly turning over in his mind some knotty problem ; then he said : ‘I suppose if I proved to her and to you that I am not a thief, this marriage could be brought about—hey, sir ?’

‘That is not enough. She will not leave you while your honesty is doubted by a single person. I am not the only one she loves.’

‘Do you believe that, sir ?’ he asked eagerly.

‘I am sure of it.’

‘Ah ! that is what made you so furious like, when you found me barring your way in the door there ?’ He smiled at the idea of my jealousy.

‘Possibly. It makes me now impatient to think that all this unhappiness should be prolonged, if you have the means of ending it in your possession. It is your duty to clear your character.’

‘You doubt my honesty if you think I am not doing my duty,’ said Davie, with some asperity.

‘Your judgment may be in fault. You are protecting Lady Kestral at the expense of your daughter.’

‘You do not like Lady Kestral?’

‘No. I think she has forfeited all claim to consideration. Her conduct at the present time, when she could by a word remove suspicion from you, who have been her best

friend, proves that she is utterly heartless and worthless.'

'And you think I should be justified in publishing her shame to the world, sir?'

'Yes.'

'You think so because you dislike that unhappy woman, maybe. But tell me, sir, if you would think so if she were something nearer to you than an aunt. Supposing now she were your mother, would you counsel me to proclaim the wantonness of her youth?'

This extraordinary question silenced me. It seemed to me beside the mark. While I was yet considering it, Davie rose and took a turn or two across the room. Suddenly he stopped, and said, with a deep sigh :

'I see nothing for it, Mr. Falkland, but to wait. I will take Delia away, and we must hope for some lucky accident to

change our fortunes. Help sometimes comes from the most unlikely quarters.'

These words were scarcely spoken, when the door opened, and a servant, bringing Davie a couple of cards, said that the gentlemen were in waiting.

'Squire Humphrey and Mr. Shotter,' said Davie showing me the cards; 'they came yesterday, just after Delia's swoon, and I sent word that I shouldn't be at home till this afternoon—and here they are. Who knows but that they have come to apologize for leaving my table t'other day, and that we may once more get friends about us, and jog on in the old way? Show the gentlemen in, Bates. I warrant,' he added hopefully, as the servant went out, 'that here's the very turn of fortune we are looking for.'

'I hope you may be right,' said I ruefully. 'Do you wish me to stay?'

'By all means. A piece of good luck is

like a bottle—it loses half its flavour taken in solitude.’

The servant ushered in the two visitors, who, having made a very formal bow to us, took the chairs placed for them, and glancing at the servant, waited in silence for his withdrawal.

‘Glad to see you, gentlemen. You can go. Bates. Fine weather for your hops, Mr. Humphrey.’

Squire Humphrey bowed stiffly once more, and the servant being gone, said, after clearing his throat :

‘Mr. Adams, hem !—we are come on behalf of, hem !—Lord Kestral. We are his lordship’s friends, you understand.’

‘I am sorry to hear it, sir. I’d rather you were mine.’

‘In the first place,’ resumed the Squire, ‘we wish to know if it is true that after beating Mr. Randolph Bond, you bade him

tell Lord Kestral that you would serve him in the same fashion if he were ten years younger.'

'Yes, gentlemen. Mr. Bond has told the truth for once in his life. I did say that.'

'In that case his lordship demands that you—hem !—retract your words and make apology for the insult offered him.'

'I see nothing to retract,' said Davie calmly ; ' I meant what I said, and what I meant then I mean now. The old man deserves the whipping I gave his step-son, for he has encouraged the young pup in his ill behaviour, who, but for him, would in all likelihood never have annoyed me. 'Tis Lord Kestral who owes me an apology, and you may tell him that for his comfort.'

'Then we may understand that you refuse to apologize?'

‘That you may most certainly.’

‘But one course remains, Mr. Adams : you must give his lordship satisfaction, which, despite your disparity in rank, he is willing to accept.’

‘I don’t understand you, sir ; if ’tis any satisfaction to Lord Kestral to find he has got off cheap, he is welcome to it. I don’t know what you think of it, sir ; but it looks to me as if you had been sent on a fool’s errand.’

‘To be very plain with you,’ said Squire Humphrey, bridling up at this insinuation, ‘his lordship proposes to fight you.’

‘Fight me !’ exclaimed Davie, with a ludicrous expression of amusement and incredulity in his face. ‘Fight me !’ he repeated, bursting into laughter. ‘Why, I could floor the old man with my open hand. Fight, at my time of life, and with a man who’s nought but lath and plaster, so to

—speak—not I! Why, Mr. Humphrey, sir, I'm surprised at you calling yourself his friend, and backing him up in such nonsense. I gave you credit for more solid sense, sir, for you seemed the other day to talk reasonably enough about hops and horses, and that sort of thing.'

'Then you refuse to apologize, and you refuse to fight?' cried Squire Humphrey, jumping up in choler.

'I do,' said Davie, rising. 'Does that surprise you, Mr. Humphrey?'

'Not at all. Your refusal merely confirms the bad opinion I had of your character.'

'What do you mean by that?' cried Davie angrily.

'What do I mean, sir? I mean what I said to his lordship this morning, that a man who will tamely bear the imputation of dishonesty is not likely to risk his

life to save himself from the stigma of cowardice.'

With this, he clapped on his hat fiercely, and was about to leave the room with his friend, when Davie, who had stood for a moment or two stupefied by this speech, overtook him, and said :

· I must beg your pardon, Mr. Humphrey, for I believe I have mistaken you greatly. Will you have the goodness to tell me how Lord Kestral wishes to fight me ?'

· That is a matter to be arranged between your seconds and us. You would have the choice of weapons.'

· Come back, sir, I pray you. I've been making the stupidest blunder in the world, but one that's natural enough for one of my ways and habits. I'm country bred and born, like yourself, and you know how countrymen settle their disputes. 'Tis only within this last year that I've been mixing

with the London gentry, and as you see, I han't yet picked up all their niceties. This is a duel you've come to arrange. sir ?'

'It is.'

'Well, to be sure! I thought it was only young bucks who fought 'em, and not men of our age—still less such old fellows as Lord Kestral. Well, well; live and learn. I give you my word,' he added, with a laugh, 'I thought he wanted to box me; which would be ridiculous indeed, seeing he could have no chance of winning. But we're to use weapons, hey ?'

'Sword or pistol—whichever you prefer.'

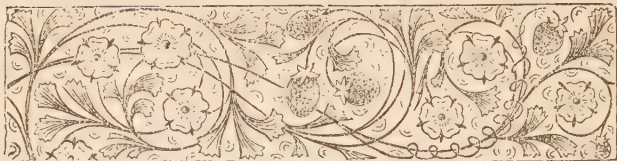
'Oh, it's all the same to me—I'm as good at one as t'other,' he laughed. 'Have the kindness, sir, to tell the old man I'll meet him when and where he likes.'

'You have our cards—you will send your friends to us.'

‘Yes; I dare say I can still find one or two to serve me in this affair.’

‘On the other hand, if you prefer to make an apology——’

‘Sir,’ said Davie, interrupting him, ‘if my words were victuals and drink, I’d die of starvation rather than eat ’em. I have never shot a sparrow, nor taken the life wantonly of the meanest thing that crawls, but I’ll do my best to kill Lord Kestral. He has received nought but kindness at my hands, but he has done his utmost to ruin me, and to dishonour me before my friends and in the sight of my daughter. I accept gladly this honourable means of punishing him, and may God forgive me if I punish him beyond his deserts.’



## CHAPTER VIII.

### FALKLAND'S ACTIVITY IN EQUIPPING DAVIE FOR THE FIGHT.

**I** HAD said not a word during this interview, and after the two country gentlemen were gone I could find nothing to say to Davie ; who, as deep in thought as I, sat a little removed from me, seeming not to know that I was by.

I dreaded the result of this meeting, yet I could see no way of averting it. Davie had closed all ways of retreat, and I knew his character too well to believe that even

if an outlet were found he would avail himself of it. Davie had the advantage of years, but this was outbalanced by Lord Kestral's skill. Success either with pistol or rapier did not depend upon strength. If my uncle had only enough force to hold a weapon for five seconds, Davie would fall—and then what would become of Delia? Would she ever forgive me for permitting him to fight? These reflections were at length interrupted by Davie.

‘Of course, Mr. Falkland,’ said he, ‘this must not get to Delia’s ears. For her sake you must help me to keep it secret.’

‘She’ll hear of it soon enough, anyway,’ said I gloomily.

‘I look to you to give me courage, not to take it away,’ he said reproachfully. ‘I think I could dance like the Indian savages at the prospect of this fight, if it wasn’t for thinking of Delia. Come, sir, tell me you’ll

stand by her if the worst happens that may—cheer me a little.’

‘ You know I shall stand by her, Davie.’

‘ Aye, that’s right. But I would to heaven you were man and wife now,’ and he added, with a touch of regret, ‘ I did hope to see you married, sir.’

‘ So you will,’ said I, shaking off my spleen.

‘ Do you think so, sir? well, so do I. I’ve a mighty belief in Providence. In these battles we’ve had with the French, we’ve always got the best of it, which shows that God helps the right. In all the fights I’ve ever read on we’ve come out well, which is natural, if Providence ain’t blind to the badness of foreigners in general. Not but what your uncle, according to his own showing, is vastly handy at this sort of game. I’ve heard him chatter by the hour together about pinking Lord This and tucking-up Sir That.’

‘Do you know anything about duelling?’

‘God bless your heart, sir, not I! I’ve never handled a sword in my life, and I was always mortal afeard of fire-arms. I’d beat anyone with a scythe, and I was reckoned one of the best players at ninepins in Ches-hunt, but that’s about as near as I’ve gone to any practice with swords and bullets. But I suppose I can learn?’

‘There’s not much time.’

‘When do you count this little business is to be settled, sir?’

‘Your seconds must see Lord Kestral’s to-morrow, and possibly they will fix the meeting for the next morning.’

‘Short and sharp, hey—well, so much the better: the sooner ’tis over, the easier I shall be, in all events. By the way, sir, what am I to do about seconds?—I can’t ask you, as ’tis your uncle I’m to fight; and hang me

if I have another friend in the world now, thanks to my good fortune.'

'I think you may count upon Mr. Rogers for one, and Drench for the other.'

'Mr. Rogers hasn't come back from his friends at Sevenoaks. It looks as if he didn't care to be in the house with me, don't it, sir?'

'Not at all. He told me before going that he should stay at Sevenoaks if he were asked, with the hope that in a few days we should get over our difficulties. He saw that his presence here was awkward for us. You may rely upon his support. I'll go to Sevenoaks this evening, and fetch him.'

'I'm sure I am much obliged to you, Mr. Falkland. I suppose, sir,' he added, after a moment's reflection, 'you don't know e'er a cut-throat who could put me up to a few wrinkles in this business?'

'What weapon shall you use?'

‘ Oh, I must go at him with a sword, sir, for I should have no chance with a pistol. I can’t see a boy scaring of crows, but I must shut my eyes when he’s about to fire.’

I bethought me of a French refugee, one Monsieur Perrotin, who had sat to Mr. Rogers as a model—being wonderfully well formed in the arm—and amused us vastly in the time allotted for rest by his feats of dexterity with the small sword, no less than by his endless histories of the duels successfully fought by gentlemen whom he had instructed in the art. I promised Davie I would try to get this man ; and having taken some refreshment, I took leave of him, and drove in a gig to Sevenoaks, where, without much difficulty, I succeeded in finding Mr. Rogers. I told him the object of my visit, and gave him a pretty accurate description of the interview between the two country gentlemen and Davie.

‘Well,’ said he, when he had heard me out ; ‘I’ll believe no ill of a man who has the spirit to fight under such disadvantages, and I will stand by him willingly.’

We went together to Drench, whom I found far less ready to accept the office of second.

‘A pretty job this is for me, truly,’ said he, giving a kick at the cat, who was curled up asleep on the hassock under the table. ‘Stole a pair of kidneys last night, did you? Left me nothing for breakfast but a scurvy round of toast—hey?’ and with that he caught up a napkin from the table, which was laid for supper, and giving a flick at the cat, whipped a drinking-glass off the table and sent it spinning against the brass fender, on which it smashed in a thousand pieces. ‘Curse the cat!’ he cried. ‘You might have hit on a better person than me for this affair, I should think, Falkland. It’s ten

to one if I shall match that glass in Seven-oaks. If I beg off, Adams will take offence—and if I accept, Humphrey will have nothing more to do with me. This may be the ruin of my practice. Good as eighteen-pence out of my pocket,’ he grumbled, picking up the fragments of the broken glass. ‘You know your aunt’s ill a-bed, Falkland. A confounded cat! Hanged if I know precisely what’s the matter with her ladyship, but ’tis something serious, or I’m a Dutchman. A pair of kidneys and a tumbler-glass! that’s good enough for twenty-four hours, I fancy! She and your uncle are staying with the Squire—sent for me this afternoon. I made light of it, as you may suppose, not to frighten her out of the house or alarm the family—but there is every symptom of fever. The whole family’ll catch it,’ he pursued cheerfully, rubbing his hands, and for the moment seeming

to forget all about the duel, and the cat, and the tumbler ; ‘ for there’s no keeping the women out of her room ; they all want to learn how to be sick like a lady of title.’

‘ Well, Drench,’ said I, ‘ you must wait upon Mr. Humphrey to-morrow morning with Mr. Rogers.’

‘ Yes, with a bolus in one hand and a sword in the other : a pretty picture of a respectable family doctor ! I shall cut my fingers with these cursed splinters presently. Did Adams send you to me with this invitation?’

‘ Yes, and you can’t refuse it. I undertake that you shall not be out of pocket by your friendship.’

‘ Thank you, Falkland, that’s kind. I should like to know what act of mine justifies the insinuation that my reluctance proceeds from mercenary considerations ? You

know well enough that if Adams hadn't a penny in the world I'd be his second. Humphrey can get another doctor if he likes; 'tain't that, 'tis this cursed concatenation of aggravating trifles which upsets my bile!' and with these words he flung the fragments of the broken tumbler under the grate.

My friends accompanied me to the Coach and Horses, where I had bespoke a post-chaise on my way to Drench's house—for, by good luck, Mr. Rogers had Monsieur Perrotin's address in his pocket-book, and he agreed with me that no better man could be found to instruct Davie—and there I bade them good-bye, and presently was spinning along the London Road to seek the agile Frenchman.

'Twas past midnight when I arrived in Soho, and found the house in which Monsieur Perrotin lived. 'Twas a French

lodging-house; there was not a light in any of the windows, but the door stood wide open, for, as I found, some of the lodgers were dancers at the opera, and the last had not yet come in. I knocked at the first door I came to, and asked for Monsieur Perrotin, and a woman's voice told me I should find him at the top of the house. Thither I groped my way up the dark and narrow staircase, and after waking up a couple of families in my search, and being heartily cursed for my mistake, I succeeded in finding my man and arousing him from his sleep. I told him my name, and said I must speak with him at once on a matter of importance; after a few minutes' consideration, he dropped out of bed and began to grope about for his tinder-box, and at the end of ten minutes spent in getting a light and execrating everything but me, for whom his curses were most intended, he opened

the door and asked me what my business was, with as little complacency as needs be. No sooner, however, had he learnt the purpose for which he was wanted, than his whole manner changed, and he proceeded to dress himself with the utmost alacrity, questioning me the while in the most courteous terms of his courteous language, as to the relative merits of the principals to be engaged, their age, their bodily proportions and address, their experience in fighting, and, in short, drawing from me so many minute particulars, that I verily believe he knew as much about Davie and Lord Kestral by the time he had got into his breeches, as the reader may have learnt through reading all the pages I have writ on the subject.

When he at length finished setting his wig and was completely dressed—and as handsomely, too, as any Bond Street beau, for

his clothes were the gift of a gentleman of quality whom he had helped to a victory, and were worn only on *fête* days and such important occasions as the present—he fetched out from beneath the dirty bed a handsome mahogany-wood case containing a pair of duelling swords, and a bag of green baize containing masks, pads and gauntlets; these, together with half a dozen foils, we presently carried downstairs and put in the chaise. He returned to the house to kiss his father and mother, who lived on the first floor, and then he took his seat beside me; I gave the word to the post-boy, and we started off. About five o'clock we reached the Coach and Horses at Sevenoaks, and thence we drove in the gig which I had left there the preceding evening to Maplehurst, where we arrived shortly after eight.

To avoid Delia's observation, I bade the driver take us round to the stables by the

back way, and there I left Monsieur Perrotin, and went to find Davie. A servant told me that he was taking breakfast with his daughter and Miss Dobson in the long-room, and I was sorely tempted to go in and join the little party, for my heart went out towards Delia. I longed to see again her dear face and hear her musical voice, and to prove to her by my reserve that I regretted my hasty anger, and wished to atone for it and respect her feelings above all things. But perceiving on reflection that my presence must embarrass her, and that my contrition and reserve could only increase her own sufferings by sympathy with me, I resolved to deny myself this gratification ; and so, laying hold of the fellow's arm as he was about to open the door, I bade him say nothing concerning my presence, and betook myself to the library, where I sat down, leaving the door a

little ajar, that I might catch a glimpse of my darling as she came from breakfast, and so I waited, my heart beating quickly with love and expectation.

I felt highly satisfied with myself for having taken this course, especially when I came to consider how my intrusion would have acted upon Davie's spirits, spoiling his happiness in Delia's society, and embittering this morning meal, which might possibly be the last he was to take with her. I had not waited long, when they came out, he and she, hand-in-hand. She was pale, but looking far less unhappy than when we met, and this should have caused me to rejoice. Yet—so unreasonable and selfish did love make me—I own I felt a pang of disappointment to find that she did not share the sick sorrow of my heart in our separation. She disappeared from my narrow range of vision ; but I could hear her talking at the

terrace door with Davie, who was speculating upon the hour of my return. Then I heard the exchange of kisses, and she came across the hall and looked into the room she had left. Miss Dobson had gone upstairs, and the room was empty. She looked about, as if to see if any servant was near, and then she went up to the pedestal on which was placed the clay model we had made together, and stood before it, looking at it in still silence for some minutes. She moved a little, and I saw her eyes were resting on the base, where at my bidding she had put her signature; and then she put her arms gently about the clay, and bending down, kissed the name of Falkland. With a little moan she raised her head and walked away, and I lost sight of her again until she crossed the landing on the great stairs with slow and weary steps.



## CHAPTER IX.

AN ATTEMPT TO SAVE DAVIE THROUGH THE  
INTERVENTION OF LADY KESTRAL.

**I** SLIPPED out of the house and overtook Davie in the drive, where he was walking with his hands behind him and his eyes on the ground. He was grave, but by no means melancholy, and he greeted me with a genial, kindly smile, and warmly pressed my hand.

I told him I had brought the fencing-master, and he thanked me heartily for the trouble I had taken, as we turned into the

path by the back of the house and stepped out briskly towards the stables.

‘I can’t help thinking,’ said he cheerfully, ‘that all will go well, for the fight is not of our seeking ; we have right on our side, and surely Providence, which is merciful in all things, will not be unmerciful in this.’

I assured him that I was of his opinion ; and, indeed, the confident assurance of Monsieur Perrotin had encouraged me to hope for Davie’s success ; but this did not alter the intention I had formed on my journey to London, which was to make another appeal to my aunt’s sense of duty or self-interest.

I introduced Davie to Monsieur Perrotin, who saluted him with a prodigious fine bow. We went into the house and took some breakfast, and then proceeded to the out-house which had been prepared as a study for

Delia and me, where it was settled Davie should receive his instructions from the fencing-master. With much delight the Frenchman set his foils in order, and opening the mahogany case, displayed the pair of swords, which he graciously placed at the disposal of Davie, who, taking one in his hand, made a cut or two to the right and left, and then, passing his thumb along the edge, seemed hugely surprised at the idea of anyone being killed by such a slight instrument.

‘I could do more mischief with a crab stick in five minutes,’ said he, ‘than your uncle could do with one of these things if he thrashed me till nightfall.’

But he very quickly changed his opinion when Monsieur Perrotin explained the proper use of the weapon, and putting a foil in his hand, demonstrated how easily he might be run through the body by a skilful hand,

and how impossible it was to defend himself against the point in his present ignorance.

‘If we’re to fight with spits,’ said he, ‘I’m likely to be trussed up as neatly as e’er a pullet that was ever put down to roast.’

But Monsieur Perrotin was not discouraged by these signs, and vowed he would in the course of a single day make him a match for any English antagonist, if he would only obey his instructions.

‘Then let us begin at once, for God’s sake,’ said David, ‘for the day is getting on.’

I had given out to the servants that I was about to commence modelling, and did not wish to be disturbed, and I knew that this intimation coming to Delia’s ears would keep her away from the outhouse ;

so when Davie and Monsieur Perrotin had settled down to their business I left them, and taking a turn through the shrubbery, struck into the little wood, and reached the lane without being seen by anyone of the house. I soon reached the village, and having learnt which road to take, I set off at a brisk pace for Squire Humphrey's, where I arrived at the end of half an hour.

Accident and fashion facilitated my seeing Lady Kestral, for Squire Humphrey and Lord Kestral were gone for a drive, and Mrs. Humphrey and her daughters were yet a-bed ; the servant, a buxom Kentish wench, explaining with a grin, that since her ladyship lay in the house, neither the mistress nor the younger ladies ever thought of rising before eleven. I bade the girl tell my aunt that I wished to speak with her on a matter of importance, and she presently

brought me word that Lady Kestral would see me in her bed-chamber, a piece of London politeness which seemed to greatly scandalize the honest lass.

My aunt was clearly unwell ; her face was flushed and her eyes were heavy. Yet was that vanity, which had taken the place of all better feelings, so paramount in her nature, that, though heavy with sickness, her first thought was to appear pleasing to the eye. She had a powder-pot in one hand and a hand-mirror in the other ; and, dropping these as I entered, she rested her elbow on the pillow, and fell into an attitude which may have been graceful, but was not, I am certain, comfortable.

‘ Don’t look at me, George ; don’t look at me,’ she cried. ‘ I must be horrid, I am sure. I am frightened at my own complexion. If I had lived here all my life, I couldn’t be more vulgarly red. The

air is killing me ; 'tis far too strong for me. Don't you think I am a fright ?'

' You look unwell,' I said.

' Unwell ! what a word. You should be a Quaker, George, for I protest you have as little gallantry and as much bluntness as any one of the sect. I shouldn't be surprised to hear from your lips that I look older and plainer than when you saw me last.'

' I have no such matter to talk about,' said I impatiently. ' You know what happened yesterday ?'

' Yesterday—yesterday, let me see. Oh, yes ! some one brought me a book of fashions for last March to amuse me, and I protest she succeeded to a marvel. Poor country soul ! she didn't know how we were all dying to laugh at her.'

' I see you have not heard that your husband has sent a challenge to Davie.'

' My lord sent a challenge to Honest

Davie !' she exclaimed in astonishment, rather than alarm. 'What can be his object?'

'That you should know better than I.'

'I know nothing. 'Tis the first I have heard of this affair.' She leant back upon her pillow, and shielding her eyes from the light with her hand, lay for some moments silent ; then, raising herself, she said petulantly, 'Give me a little toast-and-water from the table ; my head aches. I cannot think collectedly, and I want to understand this.'

I gave her a cup of the beverage, which she drank with avidity. Then, knitting her brow and shutting her eyes, she asked with impatience what we had been talking about.

'Ah, yes, I recollect,' she said, when I mentioned Davie's name. 'My husband has sent him a challenge, and I want to know why. You must help me, George, my

head is light. Why has Lord Kestral challenged Davie ?'

'The reason he gives is that Davie insulted him.'

'It is not that.' Lady Kestral shook her head, still holding her hand over her eyes. 'His rank would absolve him from the necessity of avenging an insult offered by a person of such doubtful character as Davie ; and my lord is not a man to risk his life carelessly.'

'Perhaps he thinks he has nothing to risk by the challenge.'

'Ah!'

'He has been led to believe that Davie is a thief ; he may very reasonably conclude that he is therefore a coward. He may expect to frighten Davie into an apology, and so to obtain the whip-hand of him. If Davie apologized for resenting an insult to himself, he would tacitly acknowledge your

son's right to insult him—and must pay to be exempted.'

'I understand that. Your conclusion is likely enough to be the right one.' She dropped her hand and glanced towards the door; then in a low voice she said: 'But Davie is not a thief.'

'No, nor a coward either. He has accepted the challenge; his seconds will meet Lord Kestral's this morning, and the duel will take place, unless you interpose.'

'I! What can I do?'

'Tell your husband the truth; when he sees that he has nothing to gain, and that Davie is prepared to meet him, he will have the discretion to retire.'

'I remember you said something to this effect when we were last alone.'

'Yes; but there is a stronger motive now to do your duty. The life of your most faithful friend is in danger, and the happiness

and welfare of his daughter also, and they shall not suffer by your selfishness. If you do not tell Lord Kestral all that you have told me, I will.'

'Notwithstanding that the facts were given you in confidence, and that it would be to your dishonour to betray me.'

'Notwithstanding that.'

'Don't shout, George.'

I was not conscious of having raised my voice, though it is likely enough I had, for I was losing patience.

'I can scarcely hold my head up, 'tis splitting. Throw the window open. I want to be cool, and to see what I ought to do.'

When I went back to the bedside after opening the window, Lady Kestral's eyes were closed, and her quick heavy breathing showed that she had fallen into a doze. I waited a minute or so, and she gave a rest-

less turn and opened her eyes in a bewildered manner.

‘Yes, yes,’ she said, raising herself on her elbow with an irritable expression. ‘I know—my husband and Davie. We were talking about them.’

‘You said you wished to do what you should do,’ said I, ‘and if you have any sense of gratitude you will keep your word. Consider what this man has done for you—how he alone befriended you in your distress; how patiently he has stood your friend, even when he found that you had ceased to be his. Only two days ago I heard him promise to make a certain allowance that you might sustain a proper position in society.’

‘You heard him promise that—to whom?’

‘To your husband.’

‘That shows that he still admires me!’ she said, with a momentary gleam of complacency.

‘It shows that he still pities you.’

‘Whether ’tis pity or admiration he feels for me, I have no doubt he would make me his wife if I were a widow. Why do you wish to prevent this meeting? You are not more fond of your uncle than I am of my husband, and ’twould be to the advantage of us all if he were out of the way. Upon my life, I think you’d play the part of Marplot to perfection.’

‘Will you tell your husband why Davie conceals the will, or shall I?’ I asked, rising.

‘You can tell him, if it pleases you: it will only give me the trouble to deny every word of your story; it will be to his lordship’s interest to believe me. Don’t be a fool, George, if you can help it.’ She closed her lips tightly with a little moan of pain; and for a moment lay silent, clasping her hands upon her forehead. Then she proceeded in irritable tones, ‘Show

me that it is to my advantage to confess everything, and you are more likely to persuade me than if you performed your worst threats !’

‘ If you consult only your own interest,’ said I, ‘ you will prevent the duel. Davie must fall——’

‘ Why must he fall ?’ she asked, interrupting me. ‘ Davie is a strong, healthy man, yet in the prime of life ; Lord Kestral is past sixty, and feeble beyond his years.’

‘ My uncle has skill ; Davie—as you may suppose—has none in this polite art, and success depends entirely upon skill.’

‘ Ah ! I didn’t think of that. Go on——’

‘ If he falls, your early and late ingratitude will be exposed as soon as his papers are opened.’

‘ He will burn the paper that implicates me before he fights, if he expects to fall.’

‘He will do nothing of the kind. For, much as he respects your welfare, he cares more for that of his daughter. For her sake he will burn nothing that may clear his name from dishonour and establish her just right to his fortune.’

‘Her right to his fortune—her right to his fortune! Give me that shawl, and shut the window—I am freezing.’ Indeed, she was trembling violently, and spoke through her teeth, which she had closed to prevent their chattering. ‘Her right to his fortune,’ she reiterated as I came back from the window. ‘Then you think he will leave all he has to her?’

‘I am sure he will.’

‘Does he know that you have come to me?’

‘No ; but he will, when I return. I shall tell him my object in coming here, and if after that he finds that you have done

nothing to prevent his fall, you may rely upon gaining nothing by it.'

'You mean he would cut me out of his will if I am in it?'

'He would be a fool indeed, if he left you a penny-piece after that.'

'On the other hand——?'

'You know his character well enough to be certain that, so far as his power extends, it would be strained to reward you.'

'Oh God, my head!' exclaimed Lady Kestral, bowing down and clasping her forehead with her hands. 'Yes, yes, I see it all clearly now,' she presently continued, speaking in that position. 'You have shown me where my interest lies. Thank you; now leave me. I am ill.'

'But,' said I, 'you have not told me your intention.'

'I shall tell my husband all.'

'Send for him and tell him in my pre-

sence,' I said, knowing that her word was not to be trusted.

'Ha!' she exclaimed, rocking from side to side with her head in her hands, 'maybe you would like the whole household to be present. You are simple enough to think that or any other absurdity. He'd say I was light-headed, and have reason for saying it. Don't you see that all men and women are not like you and your Delia, and that the majority, when they get over the feebleness of youth, are very much like Lord Kestral and me. We are not stage villains. Neither he nor I do wrong by choice, but from the sheer necessity of self-preservation. We are only too glad to do right if it does not call for self-sacrifice, and positively rejoice in it when 'tis to our advantage. You have shown me that it is to my interest to prevent this duel, and now I must show my husband that for his own sake, and not for mine, nor

yours, nor Davie's. nor any other living creature's, he must forego the satisfaction of killing Davie. That's not to be done before you. Consult *your* interest, and go. Great God !" she exclaimed passionately, throwing her head back upon the pillow in an agony of pain ; and then she drew the bed-clothes over her head to shut out the light. and I took up my hat and left her.





## CHAPTER X.

FALKLAND APPEALS TO HIS UNCLE—DAVIE'S  
LESSON AND ITS RESULT.

**I** QUITTED the house as I had entered it, without seeing either Lord Kestral, Squire Humphrey, or any member of his family. I imagined my uncle was gone into a retired spot to practise with the Squire; and as for the ladies, the canonical hour for rising had not yet struck. I went back to the hall by the same way I had taken in leaving it, and found Davie and Monsieur Perrotin close at work.

‘I’m getting on gently, Mr. Falkland,’

Davie said, when I asked what progress he made,—‘not too fast, you know, sir. We’ve scarcely had half an hour’s real fighting yet, for it has took me best part of the time to learn the first civilities of it. Thank the laws, I learnt dancing, otherwise this shuffling and scraping would be more than I could learn in a week. But as monseer says, the art of fighting is to find out your enemy’s weak p’int, and not let him discover yours; and all this is just to make the old man think that I’m as good at sticking as he is, don’t you see, sir? As a game,’ he continued, after a pause, ‘I think I should get to like duelling; but as a means of settling a quarrel it isn’t to compare with a good bout of drubbing with crab-sticks. There’s too much shilly-shallying about it, and one has to be as nimble as a pea in a frying-pan. At first I thought I was going to have it all my own way—thought I could stick

monseer first go. But, Lord ! there's no getting at him anyhow. Howsever, I know how to begin, and that's something. And now, monseer, we'll be getting on again, if you please.'

I looked on for a time. Davie did what he was told to do, and did it fairly, by dint of his strong will and ready obedience to his teacher. It seemed to me that he might in the course of the day learn a few of the movements, but that it was utterly impossible to acquire sufficient ability to defend himself for five minutes against an expert swordsman. I could not endure to watch these patient preparations for an encounter which must in all probability be fatal to my poor friend, and the cause of bitter woe to his loving daughter. I slipped out of the house, and with a heavy heart once more betook myself to the road leading to Squire Humphrey's, and there awaited with feverish

impatience the appearance of Mr. Rogers and Drench, for my whole hope now centred on Lady Kestral's influence over my uncle.

About one o'clock I espied a hack coach coming along the road from the direction of Sevenoaks, and as it passed I perceived my two friends seated within. I would not retard them by stopping the coach, but running beside it, I spoke to them through the window.

‘For God’s sake,’ I cried, ‘come to an amicable arrangement with Kestral if possible, for Davie must fall to a certainty if they meet.’

‘Does he send an apology?’ asked Mr. Rogers.

‘No ; but I believe Lord Kestral will be glad to compromise matters if he can.’

‘We will do our best,’ replied Drench, putting his hand upon mine as it rested on the frame of the window.

I gave his hand a shake in grateful acknowledgment, and fell back.

For a good hour I paced up and down the lane, keeping as near the entrance to Squire Humphrey's grounds as was politic, thrumming the papers in my pockets into shreds, and straining my ears for the sound of coach-wheels. At length the coach came out. I ran to meet it, holding up my hand. The driver pulled up, and I went breathless to the window.

‘Well?’ I asked.

‘Come inside, Falkland,’ said Mr. Rogers; seeing my excitement.

‘No. What news have you?’

‘Bad. We’ve done our utmost; and I believe Humphreys and Shotter have done theirs also. They’ve consulted with the old man, and he emphatically refuses to make any concession. Adams must make a full apology, decline to fight, or meet

Kestral to-morrow morning at seven o'clock. Come, Falkland, get in here with us. Don't give way, man.'

'Leave me here,' said I; 'I shall be better alone. The walk and the fresh air will do me good. Go on; I'll follow.'

They saw they could do nothing for me, and acted upon my advice. I was grateful to them for leaving me. The fatigue I had undergone, together with my emotions, had for the moment unmanned me, but going a little out of my way, I found a freshet, and having drunk heartily of the cold clear water, I felt much restored, and was enabled to put my thoughts into shape, and reason with myself as to what practical good I could now do. The result of these cogitations was that I rose presently from the shady bank on which I had been sitting and marched off towards Squire Humphrey's house for the second time that day.

The gatekeeper, who had previously made no objection to my going up to the house, now stopped me, and begged to know my business. I told him I wished to see my uncle, Lord Kestral.

‘Sir,’ says the fellow, pocketing the crown I had put into his hand ; ‘I have orders not to let you pass, and ’tis more than my place is worth to disobey; but if so be that you can manage your affair with a pen and ink, you can step into my lodge, write what you please, and I’ll have your letter carried up to the house.’

I went into the lodge parlour and wrote these words :

‘MY LORD,

‘I beg you to give me a brief interview: I have a statement to make which is of vital importance.

‘Your nephew and servant,

‘GEORGE FALKLAND.’

This letter the gatekeeper's wife took to the house, and she presently returned with a reply as follows :

‘SIR,

‘I shall be glad to receive you and listen to your statement to-morrow at this hour.

‘KESTRAL.’

I snatched a fresh sheet of paper, and wrote again :

‘MY LORD,

‘I conclude, from your perseverance in demanding satisfaction of Mr. Adams, that Lady Kestral has not made the confession to you which she promised me this morning she would make, and I therefore feel myself justified in stating a fact to you which I hope will induce you to withdraw your challenge. The deed by which Mr.

Adams is entitled to the property of the late Mr. Bond contains a statement of Lady Kestral's incontinence. This fact I received from Lady Kestral's lips. To shield her from public disgrace and your resentment. Mr. Adams refused to produce this paper. You will see, my lord, the injustice of punishing him for his too merciful consideration of her welfare, and be persuaded, I trust, in the interest of all concerned, to revoke your late decision. Should Mr. Adams fall, Lady Kestral's dishonour can no longer be kept secret, and his legatees will be qualified to claim restitution of the property held by your step-son through the suppression of his father's will. I shall be most happy to promote with your lordship any amicable settlement of the difficulty, and I now await your commands.

‘G. F.’

To this hastily written appeal, I received a brief answer as follows :

SIR,

It is impossible for me to believe any statement to the discredit of Lady Kestral, and I beg you to give yourself no further trouble on my account.

‘KESTRAL.’

‘P.S.—The bearer is instructed to bring no other message from you to me.’

I turned my back upon the gatekeeper and left him without a word. I could hope for nothing from Lord Kestral. Obviously he disbelieved the statement, or he would have taken longer to consider his reply. I do not think he doubted the truth of my assertion, but his wife's. She was so subtly cunning, that he would not believe even the confession that turned seemingly to her disadvantage. He suspected her every action

of being a cloak to some deep design against himself. Oddly enough, though I knew her perfidious nature, it never occurred to me that I myself was being deceived ; and this notwithstanding Davie's reticence, which had once or twice suggested to my mind that there was more in the will than I knew of or thought I knew of.

Mr. Rogers and Drench were looking at the horses in the stable when I got back to the Hall. I told them I had made an attempt to move my uncle, and failed.

‘Well,’ said Drench, ‘’tis a bad job for me.’

I was about to retort angrily, when Mr. Rogers said :

‘We expected you would try to bring about an accommodation, and so awaited your return before letting Adams know the result of our visit ; but there is no longer any reason for delay.’

‘Especially as we have eaten nothing since nine this morning,’ said Drench, ‘and that hasn’t digested properly,’ he added, thumping his chest.

The clock was then striking four ; as we walked towards the building where the sword practice had been going on, the door opened, and Davie, followed by Monsieur Perrotin, came out.

‘Look you, Falkland,’ said Drench, ‘you must put a cheerful face on the matter, for the poor devil won’t need any trouble but his own to discourage him.’

Davie seemed in good spirits ; he shook hands with Mr. Rogers and Drench, and taking my arm affectionately, turned to them and said :

‘Well, gentlemen, when’s it to be ?’

‘Seven o’clock to-morrow morning, in the paddock behind Squire Humphrey’s garden.’

‘Very good ; we shall not over-sleep ourselves, I warrant. Lord Kestral did not wish to make it up, I suppose, sir?’

‘No ; he will listen to no adjustment of your differences short of an absolute apology.’

‘Then he must take the consequences of his obstinacy, for I have no apology to give ; I fancy,’ said he, addressing me, ‘I shall make short work of it. I’ve got into the knack of it. Monseer is quite satisfied with me—aren’t you, sir?’

‘Perfectly well. Monsieur vill done milor’s business, and make himself famous for evair, in a leetle five minuits.’

Perrotin spoke in a tone of perfect assurance which astonished me far more than it did either Mr. Rogers or Drench.

‘Bravo!’ cried the latter, ‘I’m heartily glad to hear it.’ He cast a side glance at Mr. Rogers, which I was not at a loss to

understand, for I felt tolerably certain that he, at least, had in his heart very little faith in Davie's honesty, and this announcement may only have confirmed his existing suspicion that Davie's ignorance of fencing was a pretence.

'I shall have great pleasure in showing you how 'tis done, sir, presently; but now let us go in, gentlemen, for I ordered dinner to be dished by four.'

Delia sent an excuse and kept her room.

As soon as we had eaten, we repaired to the outhouse, Davie being very anxious that we should judge of his skill, when Monsieur Perrotin proposed that we should take it in turn to represent Lord Kestral, and put Davie's ability to the test. I, having no skill whatever, declined, but Mr. Rogers accepted the invitation, and Drench promised to take his turn after. Monsieur Perrotin adjusted the masks, and having

chalked the buttons of the foils, gave the signal to begin.

Davie saluted and encountered with as much precision as his adversary, and at once opened his attack. There was a flutter, not half a dozen passes were exchanged, and then I saw Davie's foil form a curve, and he fell back, calling to Perrotin, 'I've done it, han't I, sir?'

Perrotin, for reply, took Mr. Rogers courteously by the arm, and turning him towards us, pointed to a white spot upon his plastron.

'A palpable hit,' said Mr. Rogers, gravely laying down his foil.

Drench burst out laughing, for he took Mr. Rogers's gravity for a sign of mortification.

'Well,' said he, 'I think you might have held your own a little longer than that, Rogers.'

‘See if you can do better,’ said Mr. Rogers quietly.

‘’Twould be a poor compliment to Mr. Adams if I engaged him without putting his play to a better trial,’ retorted Drench, clapping on the mask.

Davie did not lose his self-possession at the prospect of meeting a more redoubtable antagonist, but went through the preliminaries as exactly as before. He engaged and opened the attack precisely in the same manner ; then followed the same flutter of weapons, and again he fell back with an appeal to Perrotin. Drench pushed up his mask and looked at the white mark on his breast in dismay. And now Mr. Rogers laughed.

‘I don’t care,’ cried Drench, throwing down his foil. ‘*You* couldn’t serve me that trick, Rogers, and I couldn’t have been hit in fair play—’tis a cursed French *botte*.

You ought to have recovered after that thrust,' he added, addressing Davie.

'Oh, I ought to have recovered!' said Davie, with an air of mystification, for he knew about as much of recoveries as I did. 'Then you don't think I hit you fairly, doctor?'

'Oh, of course it's fair enough, when a man is unequally matched, to employ a dodge of that kind; and I dare say the hit is expected and answered between Frenchmen.'

'But it wouldn't be considered fair between two English gentlemen? It's a sort of hitting below the belt, hey, doctor?'

'Something like that, to be sure; you see, after that thrust you were bound to recover: then I should have slipped under your guard and pinked you. That side thrust was one that no man in his senses would make, be-

cause the recovery must lay him open, don't you see ?'

' Yes. I see, doctor,' said Davie, in a tone of satisfaction ; ' I thought there must be some trick in it, or our fine gentry wouldn't be so ready to fight ; and I'm much obliged to you, sir, for showing me. I have learnt about enough for to-day, so I think, gentlemen, if it's all the same to you, we'll go out and take a breath of fresh air.—I'll follow you in a minute or two,' he added, as we moved towards the door. ' I have to settle up with monseer, here, and then I'll join you.'

' That's an honest man,' said Mr. Rogers, when we were out of Davie's hearing, ' and if he gains the victory, 'twill not be due to any French *botte*, nor to your sagacity, Doctor Drench !'



## CHAPTER XI.

### DAVIE GIVES FALKLAND HIS LAST INSTRUCTIONS.

**A**S we walked on the lawn we heard now and then the voice of Monsieur Perrotin, raised high in remonstrance, but after a time these sounds ceased to reach us, and we saw him through the open gateway, seated in the gig, with his case of rapiers on his knees and his hat pulled low over his brow. The gig moved off, and Davie came through the gateway towards us.

‘You must make an excuse to leave at once, Drench,’ said Mr. Rogers, ‘and I will

go with you. Adams will want the rest of the day to spend with his daughter.'

Drench, who was thoroughly crestfallen, assented humbly, and when Davie came up, lugged out his watch, and declaring he had a patient at the point of death to see, begged permission to go without further ceremony; whereupon Mr. Rogers said, if his patient lay in the direction of Sevenoaks, he would take a seat with him in the coach, as he had an affair to transact there.

'And if 'tis no inconvenience to you, Drench,' said I, 'I will take the third seat.'

'Gentlemen,' said Davie, 'I will not pretend that I wish to detain you, for I also have affairs to look to. I shall be up betimes, and there will be breakfast on the table for those who can eat. Mr. Falkland, sir, you I hope to see to-night, as there are certain matters in which I desire your services.'

I promised to return by ten o'clock, and after a few more words we went to the coach-yard and parted with Honest Davie.

‘Stop in the village,’ said Drench, ‘I must have some brown brandy. I am sick to think of what I’ve done. If I live to a hundred, I shall never forget the look of that man’s face when he thanked me for showing him that the trick he had been taught was unfair. He was really grateful to me: he shook my hand honestly. Devil take me! I’ve not made many mistakes in my life—for a doctor—and if I’ve killed anybody, it has been in the way of business; but this is worse than all the rest put together, for here have I killed a man in full health and in friendship.’

I bade the two men farewell at the inn, wishing to be alone, and wandered I know

not whither, aimlessly, and with a dull heavy sense of despondency and sorrow.

'Twas by accident alone that I made a circuit which brought me to the little wood below the Hall, and being there, I failed to recognise the path I walked, though 'twas one I had traversed a hundred times when the Hall was my home ; but coming suddenly upon an opening, and raising my eyes from the ground. I perceived the old house before me, and not a stone's-throw distant. What should I do? Turn about and get back into the fields I had crossed? No ; it would be pleasanter to rest here and look at the house and dream of Delia. A little to the right there was fine grass with a screen of brake before it. From there I could see anyone coming from the house, and be able to escape unobserved, for the main path was at some little distance, and a thick growth of brake and bramble lay between it and

me. I stepped out of my way and threw myself on the grass.

There I lay for some five or ten minutes, and then I was startled by the sound of voices, Delia's and Davie's, as I quickly recognised. They were coming along the path I had left. It had not occurred to me that they might be in the wood. I was so sheltered by the undergrowth that they must pass without seeing me, unless they left the path ; but I could not lie still without trying to get a glimpse of my sweet Delia, so, as they came quite near, I turned my body a bit and raised myself on my hand. A twig broke under my hand. Delia ceased to speak, and through the growth I saw that they had stopped at the sound.

' 'Tis a squirrel, I warrant,' said Davie. ' Let us sit here, my dear, and watch for him. They are the prettiest little creatures

in the world, and will come quite close to you, if you sit still. There, this bank is quite dry, and as pleasant a sort of seat as any you can find—and quite dry, too. No dew to-night, dear : 'tis a sign of rain to-morrow. What a thing Providence is, Delia !—bountiful, but never wasteful. When the morrow is to be hot, Providence waters all the little herbs with dew ; when 'tis to be wet, the dews are laid by for another day. I don't see our little friend, do you, dear ? I wager he sees us with his sharp little black eye, though maybe he has run into his hole, which might well be that one in the oak yonder, just over the fork of the boughs—to see that his young'ns are well at home and safe.'

'How full of life the American woods must be!' said Delia.

'Why, as for that, dear, all woods are full of life—if you only open your eyes to look

for it. But why do you think American woods must be more so than others, Delia, hey?’

‘I have been reading about them to-day, dear ; and do you know, dear, I—I think I should like to go to America. Not to live there altogether, you know, but to see the great rivers and the wide, wide prairie lands. and the enormous trees.’

‘To say nothing of the lions and the tigers and the savages,’ said Davie, laughing heartily. ‘Why, you little madcap! what notion is this you have taken into that little head of yours?’

‘A notion that I cannot get out of it, papa. You know how whimsical I am, how headstrong and inconstant. You were quite right when you spoke of my projects as a kind of caprice ; though I recollect I felt angry at the time that you treated lightly something which seemed to

me so serious. I am capricious—I begin to see that now, dear, because my caprice has led me into a very dangerous pass.'

'And what pass may that be?' he asked, with quiet gravity.

'My betrothal to George—to Mr. Falkland,' Delia's voice trembled a little, 'which must lead to our marriage, unless we go away.'

'Don't you love him, Delia?' Davie asked, in the same earnest quiet tone.

It was a direct question which could only be answered truthfully. Delia held her tongue.

'Don't you love him?' he asked again.

She waited a moment, and then she said, with trouble in her voice :

'Yes, I do love him.'

'Thank God!' said Davie.

'But, don't you see,' she pursued in a

lighter spirit, 'tis just that which makes marriage dangerous ; for if, after all, my love is but a caprice—like my fancy for modelling, which seized me so strongly and left me so suddenly—which may endure but for a little time—think how terrible that would be for him, if we were married. Supposing a year after our marriage he should find that his wife no longer loved him, how wounded and how astounded he would be !

‘ I should think he would.’

I fancy that if I could have seen Davie’s face at that moment, I should have seen on it a ludicrous expression of suppressed merriment.

‘ And that is why,’ Delia went on hastily, ‘ I think it would be better to break off our engagement, or, at least, postpone our marriage until some future time, when I shall be more settled and reliable, you know ;

and so, dear, I think I should like to go to America. if you will humour me once more.'

· You would go with me alone?'

· Yes. We understand each other so well, and you are so patient with me, and tolerate my changeable temper as no one else would. And we have always been very happy together, dear,' her voice shook, and grew faint again. 'And I think I could go on to the end of my life as we have gone hitherto, running about from place to place, and buying whatever pleased our eyes, and amusing ourselves with constantly changing faces, and carrying out any notion that chanced to come into our thoughts.'

· You think you should be content to have me always for your companion, Delia? and would like to fly away from all the world, as it were?'

‘Yes,’ faintly and faltering she spoke.

‘You would go away to America—to-morrow, say?’

‘To-night, if you will : the sooner the better.’

‘And you will not tire of me?’

‘No, no, no ! My love for you is no caprice.’

‘Dear child, dear child !’ he murmured, in a voice as broken as hers, and I heard the sound of a muffled kiss, as though he were kissing her hair. ‘Caprice lodges in thy head, and does not touch thy heart, and thy love for no one will change ! Come,’ he added, after a minute’s silence, in which I heard my Delia sob, ‘come, dear. The sun has sunk, and a cool wind creeps. We shall surely have rain to-morrow.’

I saw them descend the path together and cross the lawn. Davie stepped out of his way to pick a flower or two, and these

he put into Delia's hand as they were about to enter the house.

‘‘Tis his last gift,’ thought I.

As the clock struck ten I entered the house. The servant told me Mr. Adams was alone in the library, and there I found him seated at the table poring over a book. A few papers were ranged in front of him neatly.

‘I am not too early, Davie?’ said I, in a tone of interrogation.

‘Not a moment,’ said he; ‘I have been reading this last half-hour. ’Tis right to read the Book at such a time as this. There is a wonderful deal of comfort to be got from it when a man’s in doubt. I’ve been reading about the Philistines and the Egyptians, sir, and it pleases me to find that Providence don’t object to fighting—and there seems to have been a good deal of it, too.’ He laid the Book aside reverently.

‘Delia went to bed at nine o’clock,’ he said.

changing the subject, 'more composed and peaceful in her mind than I have seen her since she learnt of this charge against me, and her heart overflowing with love for you, sir, and me. Had I loved her less, I might have taken advantage of her devotion. With all the world against me, she would have stood by me till the last, sacrificing every youthful hope for my sake, and growing old and cheerless in her devotion to me. While a shadow of suspicion rested on my name she would never have married you. In that she has more pride than you. And this brings us to the matter I wish to talk with you upon.' He turned to the table, and laying two papers, neatly tied with red tape, upon the table between us, he said, designating each in turn, 'There's Mr. Bond's will, and there's mine. I thought 'twould take me half the night to make out mine, but 'twas so simple, and there was so

little to say, that I writ it in ten minutes. Mr. Rogers and the doctor shall put their hands to it to-morrow morning, and then 'twill be settled. I've been careful about the date, and I've writ it large, so there'll be no mistake. I don't think I have anything particular to say concerning the contents of it, except that I should like your aunt to be treated handsome——'

'Lady Kestral,' said I, 'is unworthy of any kindly consideration. This morning I showed her that it lay in her power to prevent this duel, and she has not spoken a word to save you.'

'Poor soul!' said Davie. 'The woman must be very unhappy who has lost all feeling of kindness for her fellow creatures. Who would change places with her, sir? Not I—even if I were a thief.'

I was silenced by Davie's charity; and after a space he proceeded:

‘ I would like her to have what small comfort money can give her ; and I know, sir, that when you see things clearly you will recognise that my wishes are no more than just. So no more of that. These two papers I shall put into your hands before we start out, and you can give them to me again, if so be I come home safe and sound. But if I fall ’—he stopped and drew a long breath—‘ if I fall, sir, I want you upon that spot to open this will of Mr. Bond’s over my body, and read it, that all may know I am an honest man, and that your uncle may be punished in perhaps the only way he is capable of feeling punishment.’ He continued, with some excitement : ‘ This is not what poor Delia would call a whim on my part, it is not even a wish to be treated dead as I have not been treated living, or a mere desire for revenge. It is for the protection of the dear girl I leave behind. When you

have read the will, I would have you, sir, make Squire Humphrey and his friends come hither with you and offer an apology to Delia for having wrongly treated her as the daughter of a thief. When that is done, sir, Delia will no longer refuse to be your wife, and you will be in a position to protect her. Do you understand me, Mr. Falkland ?

‘ Perfectly.’ I said. ‘ But if this will is to prove your honesty and to confound Lord Kestral, why should you not produce it yourself, and avoid a useless and perhaps fatal duel?’

Davie considered for a moment, and then said :

‘ I have thought it unwise to tell anyone why I have kept the contents of this paper secret : it has seemed to me part of my duty to keep it to myself ; and if I were not certain that you are really and truly my

friend and Delia's, I should not hint at a word of it. I need only tell you, sir, that the publication of that paper would put Delia under the power of Lord Kestral and his wife, to show you that I have ample reason for not showing it. If Delia were your wife, 'twould be another matter ; but she having no other protection than mine, I was bound to be silent.'

I could say nothing, for as yet I did not grasp the full significance of this statement.

'And you will see further, sir, why I wish this paper to be read the very moment I am dead—if Providence does not save me—that the proof of my innocence may induce Delia to accept you at once as her husband and lawful protector.'

I think I assented to what he said, but my mind was distracted with conflicting ideas, and I know not how I comported myself.

‘That is all,’ he said, and then, looking around : ‘these papers Miss Dobson will look to ; and there are my keys : I will give them to you, sir, in the morning. And now I think we had better go and lie down for a while.’

‘Good night, Davie,’ said I, giving him my hand.

‘Good night, sir,’ he replied, holding my arm with one hand, and pressing my hand warmly with the other.

Then we separated, and I left him alone in the library.





## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DUEL.

**I** DID not undress, nor did I extinguish my light that night. I walked about the room ; I tried to fix my attention on a book ; I threw myself on the bed, trying to think calmly, and growing ever more restless. About midnight I heard Davie come upstairs and gently close his door. The wind rose, and towards morning I heard the rain pattering against the window-panes. It seemed to me useless to try to sleep, yet, nevertheless, sleep overtook me as I leant

back in my big elbow-chair, and I might have slept on till noon, had not I been awoke by a light rap at my door.

‘Yes, yes,’ said I, leaping up in a fright ;  
‘Here am I—what is it?’

Davie opened the door.

‘Mr. Rogers and the Doctor are here, sir,’ said he.

‘Good Heavens! and I asleep. What is the hour?’

‘Just gone six.’

He shook my hand. He was quite calm; there was no sign of agitation in his face, no tremor in his hand.

I hastily poured some water into the basin and dipped my face in it.

‘You will do well, sir, to put on your riding-coat, for it rains hard,’ said Davie.

I threw my coat over my arm and we left the room.

‘Softly, sir, as we pass her room,’ he whispered as we entered the corridor.

We approached the room upon tiptoe ; he fell behind as we came to the door. I didn’t look back, for I imagined he had stayed to catch the sound of her breath for the last time, or maybe to whisper some simple prayer for her happiness.

Coffee was served in the dining-room, and there sat Mr. Rogers and Drench in their long riding-coats and capes ; both were in full dress, as I saw by their swords sticking out beneath the skirts of their outer coats. A rapier lay on the table—Drench had brought it, mistrusting Davie’s ornamental weapon.

‘Rogers and I have been doing our best to induce Adams to make that *botte*,’ whispered Drench ; ‘but he’s so d——d taciturn one can’t tell what he means doing ; and he’s too much of a gentleman to let us

know if he disbelieves what we have said in behalf of the French trick. You must do what you can to persuade him.'

Davie entered the room at this moment, and Drench began stirring his coffee vigorously.

'I want you to give me a moment in the library, gentlemen, before we start,' said Davie. 'There is no great hurry; 'tis but twenty after six, and the coach will take us to our ground in a quarter of an hour.'

He helped himself to coffee, and when he had drank it we all rose and went into the library.

Davie unlocked his desk, took out the two papers, and having again turned the key, laid the bunch to which it was attached on the table beside Mr. Bond's will. Then, removing the tape from the other and turning down the bottom fold, he said :

‘This is my will, gentlemen, and I beg you to witness my signature.’

He wrote his name in a great legible hand, and Mr. Rogers and Doctor Drench put their names below it. Davie thanked them, and having dusted the signatures with a pouncet box, he refolded the paper, tied it up, and put it with the other in my hand with a significant smile. Then he gave me his keys, and, turning to his seconds, said :

‘Now, gentlemen, I think we had best be moving.’

In the entrance hall he stopped and looked round about him, taking a last look at his home ; his lips were closely set and his nostrils expanded, but there was no other sign of the emotions that must have stirred his heart.

We went out by the little door on to the terrace and so to the courtyard, where the

chariot was waiting. The hack that had brought Mr. Rogers and Drench stood hard by, and the doctor, slipping aside, opened the door, and brought out a case.

‘May I ask what you have there, sir?’ asked Davie.

‘A little apparatus which I usually carry about with me.’ replied the other, shoving it into the chariot, with a forced laugh.

It was his case of surgical instruments ; I knew the look of it well enough.

I sat upon the seat next to Davie, but I kept as far away from him as I could, for I shivered like one in a quartan, and could by no means control my muscles.

‘It wants five and twenty of seven,’ Davie observed, as we left the drive, and I think those were the only words spoken on the way.

We looked out of the windows at the dripping trees, the cows taking shelter

from the driving rain, the dark low stretch of leaden clouds, and the misty distance, and these all blurred by the drops of water on the glass, that grew larger and larger and then broke away and ran in zig-zag courses down the panes. We passed through the village. Not a soul was moving ; underneath an upturned cart a group of hens and a cock stood in wretched stillness. We made our way through a flock of sheep, driven by a shepherd hooded in an old sack ; the sheep ran up the banks snatching a mouthful here and there, as if they had no time to waste. The wheels made a constant crunching noise as they ground through the sodden lane. Such trifles as these attracted my attention and occupied my thoughts as we drove along, but my spirits were oppressed with a dull leaden weight of despair and grief.

The driver slackened his pace, and we

turned round and passed the little lodge, which I recognised as the place where I had written my notes to Lord Kestral. I was astonished to find that we were close to our destination. The gate-keeper held the gate wide and pointed along the drive, and the horses again broke into a trot.

A servant stationed in the path signalled the driver to stop, and the chariot being brought to a stand, the foot-boy opened the door, and we got out at some twenty yards from the house, where a side path led to the grounds in the rear.

‘ You will stop here,’ said Drench to the driver.

The servant who had stopped the carriage led the way. Davie and I followed, and Mr. Rogers and Drench brought up the rear.

Turning an angle, we came into a straight path, and there in the distance we saw a party of gentlemen trudging along before

us. My heart fell within me at the sight, but Davie looked at them unmoved. I heard Drench grumbling to Mr. Rogers in a low tone—he was complaining, as I know now, of the long distance it would be to carry a badly wounded man.

We passed a wicket and entered the paddock. Turning to the right, we perceived the other party grouped in the angle of the field, where 'twas somewhat sheltered by tall hedges from the driving rain. My uncle was supported by quite a large number of friends—eight or ten, maybe—and all men whom I had seen at Davie's table.

'I object to this,' exclaimed Drench. 'This is not a ring fight, and I shall refuse to let you take the ground, Mr. Adams.'

'Do nothing of the kind,' replied Davie. 'I only regret that there are not ten times the number;' and he looked at me significantly.

We were now quite close to the party, and Squire Humphrey, with Mr. Shotter, stepped forward, and were met by Mr. Rogers and Drench.

Davie waited with his hands behind him, and his eyes fixed on Lord Kestral. My uncle was standing in an easy attitude, with his rapier under his arm and his snuff-box open in his hand, chatting to a gentleman, with a superb look of careless indifference in his lifted eyebrows and the fixed smile upon his face, which was never more hideous or contemptible to my eyes. His profile was to us, and against the dark foliage I traced the line of his retreating forehead. his long hooked nose, his thin straight upper lip, his receding chin, and the loose folds of his vulture-like throat. which no cosmetic art could disguise.

‘Lord Kestral demands if you are prepared to offer an apology,’ said Mr. Rogers.

‘No, I am not,’ replied Davie, with composure.

Mr. Rogers took the message to the seconds, who carried it on to Lord Kestral. His lordship heard what they had to say, shrugged his shoulders, spoke a word, tapped his snuff-box, closed it, and put it into his pocket.

And now Drench helped Davie to take off his coat, and I, who had always thought of him as a cool and somewhat callous person, was surprised to see how nervous and troubled he looked at this moment. He was only less violently agitated than I was.

‘For God’s sake, Adams,’ I heard him say, in a low voice, ‘do not scruple to make use of all you know, or I shall count myself amongst the most unhappy and unfortunate of men.’

‘I’ll do the best an honest man may,’ Davie answered.

Lord Kestral had his coat off, and was looking towards us, with his little eyes half closed.

Davie turned to me, and our hands met in a close warm grasp. His mild eyes were full of affection. He opened his lips, as if to bid me good-bye, but the words did not leave them, and the only expression of our feelings was in the little nod with which we parted. Then he turned to Drench, and shook his hand, and having done the same by Rogers, he faced about, grasping his sword, and with his features set in manly sternness, his head erect, and a step as firm as that of a soldier on parade, he stepped out, with the doctor on one side and Mr. Rogers on the other, to meet my uncle.

I could not wait to see more. I was sick at heart. I hastened towards the wicket, nearly falling over Drench's case of instruments, which he had brought down under

his cloak, and laid upon the grass some few feet from where we had come to a stand.

At the wicket I turned, a grim fascination being upon me. Davie was saluting ; the seconds were retiring ; and my uncle was for the first time looking serious, for doubtless he was astonished to find that Davie went through these preliminaries with address.

I made another step, and the hedge was between us. And now I leant with both hands on a railing that ran along on the inner side of the hedge, for I was giddy and faint, and the ground seemed to be moving under my feet.

There was a dead silence, only broken by the 'pat, pat, pat,' of the rain upon the broad leaves of a chestnut close by. I listened to this pattering until suddenly the click of the swords engaging fell sharp and

clear upon my ears, and after that I lost the pattering of the rain, and was deaf to every sound but that of the swords. That little sound pricked my failing spirits into life. I could not see through the hedge, but a little in front of me was a page boy from the house, who had mounted upon the railings, and was peering over the hedge at the combatants, and I watched his face as an index. He was so engrossed in the preparations that he had not seen me pass the wicket, and was unaware of my proximity. He watched with round eyes; his mouth was wide open.

‘Tip, tip—tip, slit—tip, tip—tip, slit,’ sounded the rapiers on my ears, and the boy’s face was rigid as marble.

‘Tip—slit, slit, slit—’ and then the boy’s round eyes winced—his mouth and face contracted as with a spasm.

At the same moment my ears caught a

short sharp cry, a struggle of feet and a heavy thud, and then the voices of the seconds all raised together, and the hurried tread of many feet.

The boy had dropped from the railing and was running up the path with all speed towards the house.

I rushed into the paddock. Where I had last seen Davie standing was a group of gentlemen; on the outside stood my Lord Kestral, wiping his sword with a bloody handkerchief.

‘Falkland, Falkland!’ cried Drench and Mr. Rogers together.

‘Here!’ I answered.

‘Quick, man—he uttered your name.’

The men fell back, and I threw myself upon my knees beside Davie. He was lying with his left side a little raised, his head resting in the hollow of Mr. Rogers’ arm. There was a dark patch of blood upon the

bosom of his shirt and a drop was trickling from the corner of his mouth. He was livid and his eyes were nearly closed. I took his right hand and pressed it, saying—I know not what. He opened his eyes and they fell upon Lord Kestral, who had drawn near and was looking upon his work, and then they turned languidly to me. He recognised me ; lifted his left hand a few inches towards Lord Kestral and let it fall ; he tried to speak, there was a gurgling in his throat, and his head rolled heavily and fell back. I knew what he meant, but I felt that there would be time enough to clear his character when there was no longer hope of saving his life.

Drench had run for his case, and now returning, stooped over Davie's body and examined him ; then, turning his ashen face to me, he said in a tone of subdued horror :

‘Dead!’

There was an awful silence amongst us as we stood and knelt around that lifeless body ; the first to break it was Lord Kestral.

‘ Poor devil ! ’ he said in a tone of indulgent pity.

I believe he only intended to appear magnanimous, and that he intended to hurt the feelings of no one ; but Drench fired up in an instant.

‘ “ Poor devil,” you d——d old rascal ! ’ he cried, leaping to his feet : ‘ is that the way you speak of an honest man, whose shoe-strings you were not worthy to tie up ! Let me tell you that if he hadn’t been a better gentleman than you, you’d have been the “ poor devil,” at this moment. He could have pinked you if he would, and I’ll show you how, if you have the stomach for another turn with the irons.’

This tirade took the breath away from

most of those who heard it ; for nearly all knew Drench in his professional capacity, but had never heard him speak except in stilted language interlarded with medical jargon.

‘Come, Drench, your duty is here,’ said Mr. Rogers authoritatively, still kneeling by Davie’s body. ‘We must have help, Falkland, to carry the body.’

‘I ran off at full speed to fetch the footboys. Near the house I met a couple of men conveying a mattress, Squire Humphrey having already despatched a messenger to the men, who were prepared for this emergency. We hurried to the paddock, where Drench was now busily employed in doing all that the case required, and poor Davie’s body was presently laid upon the mattress and carried away.

‘The body can be taken into the house, I suppose?’ said Drench to Squire Humphrey.

‘Of course, if you have any hope;’ otherwise, I see no reason for it. You know my opinion of the man.’

‘Yes; and you know mine,’ said the furious doctor. ‘And I shall be glad to settle it with you when I’ve done with his lordship.’ He really seemed to be beside himself with chagrin at the calamity which he accused himself of having brought about.

Squire Humphrey made no response, and at Drench’s direction, and with his assistance, the body was placed in the chariot and was carried away, Mr. Rogers and Drench going with it.

‘You will do well to follow us presently. Falkland,’ Mr. Rogers had said to me. ‘You are unnerved, and can do no good. Miss Adams must be thought of, and you would only make her trouble greater by going to her now. Come on when you

are composed. We shall stop somewhere on the way—possibly at the inn; and I will go on and prepare Miss Adams for the news.'

I must have looked ill indeed; for, as I stood there after the chariot had gone, Squire Humphrey came to me, and taking me by the arm, said:

'You mustn't stand here, sir, in the rain: you are ill. Come into the house. I beg.'

'Yes,' said I, 'I will go in with you, for I have something important to say.'





## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE HUMILIATION OF LORD KESTRAL.

**S**QUIRE HUMPHREY took me into the house, and we passed through the hall, where some of the county gentlemen were taking off their cloaks and coats, into the breakfast-room, where the table was spread with chines, pasties, and cold fowl, as if for a feast of rejoicing. The Squire himself brought me a dish of steaming coffee, and insisted upon my drinking it off. His manner was anxious and nervous; as, indeed, he well might be, for 'twas no light

matter to have had a man killed on his estate, and Drench's behaviour may have shaken his faith in the justice of Lord Kestral's quarrel.

‘Do you feel easier, sir?’ he asked, as I laid down my cup.

‘Yes,’ said I. ‘Where is Lord Kestral?’

‘He is changing his clothes, probably. He will have to keep out of the way until this affair has blown over.’

A servant came up and told the Squire that the post-chaise was at the door.

‘Lord Kestral has something to learn before he goes,’ said I, starting up.

‘He will not go before he has eaten something; he will be down in a few minutes, and if you have anything to say to him, you can say it here,’ replied the Squire.

‘Good!’ said I, taking my seat again. ‘’Tis a matter in which others are con-

cerned besides my Lord Kestral,' and therewith I pulled the two papers from my breast with trembling fingers, and laid them on the table before me.

I, of course, had formed no definite plan of procedure. I could only vaguely surmise what Mr. Bond's will would reveal. But I felt sure that it would clear Davie's character from all suspicion of dishonesty. I did not intend any dramatic display; if I had any notion at all, it was that I would be guided by circumstances.

Having laid the papers on the table with a sigh, I raised my eyes, and found that I was the object of general attention.

The gentlemen had come in from the hall and seated themselves at the table; they had caught my words, and watched my action.

Seeing this, I said :

'These papers were given me by my

friend this morning before leaving his house. He expected to fall, and he desired that over his body I should read this will, which I believe is a testimony to his surpassing generosity and honour, not from any motive of self-glorification, not even from the laudable wish to be remembered with respect, but that you might at once do justice to that poor girl whose heart is to be smote with grief for her irreparable loss, and whom you and your wives and daughters have treated as the daughter of a thief.'

'I think I may say,' said Squire Humphrey, 'that our conduct was the natural consequence of Mr. Adams's persistent obstinacy in refusing to produce that evidence of his honesty which you have presumably under your hand. However, the question of justification will not be thought of at this moment, for I am perfectly sure

that no gentleman here, and no member of his family, will fail to call upon Miss Adams, and do not only what is just, but what is humane and kind towards her, if it is proved that we have been in error, hey, gentlemen ?'

There was a unanimous nodding of heads and expression of concurrence, and Squire Humphrey seemed vastly relieved.

'It is the least you can do,' I said, 'for though Lord Kestral shall be legally called to account for killing Mr. Adams, you are morally responsible for his death.'

'I don't see that, sir,' said the Squire, whereupon his friends all shook their heads, and loudly murmured their dissent.

'Do you pretend,' I cried, addressing Squire Humphrey ; 'do you pretend to think that this meeting would have taken place if you had not taken up the cause of that drunken boy ? Perhaps you have not

told your friends that Mr. Adams refused to meet Lord Kestral until you intimated to him that a refusal would be tantamount to an acknowledgment of guilt on his part. You said his refusal convinced you in your opinion of his dishonesty, and that you had observed to Lord Kestral that a man who would tamely bear a reputation for dishonesty would not risk his life to save his character from the stigma of cowardice. Those were your words. It was then, and not till then, that Davie accepted the challenge you had brought. Now tell me if you are not morally responsible for his death ?

‘We have yet to learn,’ said Mr. Shotter, ‘that the cause we sustained is unjust.’

‘Yes,’ said I; ‘you have yet to learn that the claim of a drunken boy, supported by the suspicions of his impoverished and needy guardian, is of less value than the

life of an honest man ; but I shall teach you the fact, I believe.' I cut the string that tied Mr. Bond's will. 'Though let me tell you,' I cried, 'that if my own feelings alone were concerned, I should scorn to rebut a charge which you would not have sustained had you been impartial judges. Is there one amongst you who would produce his title deeds if I charged him with holding an estate not legally his? Not one; and yet I am neither a drunken boy nor a needy and self-seeking timeserver.'

No one replied.

I opened Mr. Bond's will, and read it through. 'Twas all contained in one page. It confirmed a suspicion that had grown out of my last conversation with Davie the night before, and explained all that had hitherto seemed to me mysterious in his conduct.

As I finished it a servant entered the room, and said that a particular friend of

Lord Kestral's desired to see Squire Humphrey at once. He delivered this message, holding the door firmly with one hand, and blocking the way. At the same time, some rather dirty fingers, ornamented with a few gorgeous rings, were laid on the jamb, and a head craned forward over the servant's shoulder.

‘Only a vord or two, only a vord or two!’ pleaded the visitor.

‘If that is Lord Kestral's friend, open the door at once,’ said the Squire, rising.

The servant opened the door, and Lord Kestral's friend, with his hat in his hand, his head sunk in his shoulders, and a strenuous expression of mingled anxiety and amiability in his face, came forward. He was a stout man with large features, a pendulous under lip, and a drooping nose, and he spoke in a deep bass voice, with a slight lisp in his articulation.

‘Only a vord,’ he reiterated, meeting the Squire and grasping his hand, which he retained, giving it an occasional shake as his feelings prompted; ‘*is* he killed?’

‘Who?’

‘Lord Kethtral, that vorthy nobleman; *is* he killed?’

‘No!’

‘God *bleth* him! God *bleth* him!’ exclaimed his friend fervently. ‘I heard there had been a duel between him and Mithter Adamth, and I wath told that one of ’em wath pinked, and I thaid to mythelf, thayth I, “If itth Lord Kethtral,” I thayth, “I’m a loht man! God *bleth* him, and grant him a long life, for I’ve got a lot of billth againtht him.” Mithter Adamth I can thpare: he don’t owe me nothing; but if Lord Kethtral had gone down, it would ha’ broke my heart, it would.’

‘Is that all you have to say?’ asked Squire

Humphrey, disengaging his hand with some difficulty.

‘Thatth all. My mind’tth eathy now. I don’t want to bother him—not at all. The lawth of thith free country protect him from arretth. But you can tell him that I’ve got an executiion upon hith ethtate, and mutht put the bailiffth in hith houth to take care of the furniture, if the little bill drawed by Mithter Randle Bond, what Mithter Adamth refuted to meet, ithn’t paid up by to-morrow at mid-day. Don’t want to bother the vorthy old nobleman, you underthtand, gentlemen—far from it, God bleth him!—and you can jutht tell him, thir, that Mithter Cohen called upon him—he knowth me ath if I wath hith his own fletth and blood; God bleth him! Good morning to you, gentlemen; and may good digethiion wait on appetite.’

He bowed himself out with these words, and Squire Humphrey sent the servant with

a sharp rebuke to the lodge-keeper for permitting anyone to enter.

I made no comment upon this incident; but I saw that it made Squire Humphrey and his friends ill at ease. The Squire walked up and down the room, looking every other second at his watch, and then going to the door to see if Lord Kestral was coming. Clearly, the news of the duel was spreading quickly, and it could not be long before the constables sought the survivor.

I cut the tape that bound Davie's will, and opened it. It was even shorter. He had taken Mr. Bond's will as his model, and in a few plain words bequeathed the whole of his estate to me. Following the bequest was this paragraph:

‘For reasons which will be understood after reading Mr. Bond's will, I leave nothing to Delia. She is betrothed to Mr.

Falkland, and will marry him, and may their union bring them perfect and enduring happiness. 'This is my last hope.'

As I folded up the paper the door opened and Lord Kestral entered. His lacquey had repaired some ravages that the rain had made upon his face, and he was once more radiant and smiling. The embarrassment of Squire Humphrey, the moody silence of the gentlemen around the table, seemed to astonish him. I imagine his intense vanity had led him to expect an enthusiastic reception and loud congratulations. He approached the table with the eternal expression of complacency about his mouth, but with more than one shifty glance to the right and left. I was at the lower end of the table and escaped his observation.

'My lord,' said I, 'I am about to read the will of Mr. Bond, that your friends and

you may know in what kind of cause you have taken the life of Davie Adams.'

My uncle wiped his eyes hastily, and putting up his glass, looked down the table at me. I opened the paper and read :

' "This is the will of me, Samuel Bond, of Fox Lane, Southgate, in the county of Middlesex. I give and devise all my estate and effects, real and personal, of which I may die possessed or entitled to, unto my faithful servant David Adams absolutely and without condition, and I appoint my said servant David Adams executor of this my will, and I hereby revoke all former wills and codicils.

' "To my wife Letitia I leave nothing. Her incontinence and the concealment of it before her marriage——" '

'What is this ?' cried Lord Kestral indignantly.

I repeated the sentence, and said :

‘This should not surprise you, my lord; I told you yesterday, in asking you to withdraw your challenge, that the fact was acknowledged by Lady Kestral—that in my interview with her yesterday morning she promised to reveal it to you. She saw this will after her husband’s death and before her marriage with you. For her own selfish purposes she told me of this clause in the will months ago, and led me to suppose that it was to protect her from public shame and your resentment that Davie refrained from producing it. But it was not for that reason only.’

‘Be good enough to let a servant desire Lady Kestral to come down here at once,’ said my uncle to Squire Humphrey. ‘She must answer this charge herself. If it is true, I am a shamefully ill-used man; if it is false—as I believe it is—she will

deny it, and I am sure she will be believed.'

Squire Humphrey went to the door and sent a servant upstairs with the message ; then he closed the door and returned to the table.

' You can continue, sir !' said Lord Kestral carelessly.

" Her incontinence and the concealment of it before her marriage with me," ' I read ;  
" the forsaking of her legitimate child after ——" ' "

' That's of a piece with the rest,' said Lord Kestral with a laugh.

I continued without heeding the interruption :

" And the irregular life she is now leading as a player in London, render her unworthy both as a mother and a wife of my consideration.

" My daughter, Delia, the legitimate off-

spring of my marriage with the said Letitia, I leave to the guardianship of the aforesaid David Adams, whose more than paternal tenderness for her since her abandonment by my wife has proved that he is the fittest and most trustworthy person for that office.”’

Lord Kestral dropped into his chair, as if stunned by this unexpected announcement.

‘“I bequeath nothing to my daughter,”’ I continued, reading the will, “that her mother may have no inducement to withdraw her from the custody of the said David Adams.”’

‘The will is dated, and signed, and witnessed by a Dr. Blandly and the Rev. Benjamin Baxter. It is clear to you now,’ I said, looking round the table, ‘that you have supported the unfounded claim of a boy who has no title to your respect—

except as the bastard step-son of Lord Kestral.'

'It is a lie from beginning to end!' cried Lord Kestral, striking the table. 'Who shall prove that the will is not a forgery made by the man Adams to provide for his daughter in the event of his failing to kill me in this duel?'

'That can be proved—and shall be,' said I, 'before the end of the day. The birth was undoubtedly registered, and Dr. Blandly it was whose greeting informed you that Mr. Adams was that Honest Davie you had hoped to find.'

'Gentlemen!' exclaimed Lord Kestral, after a moment's consideration, in which he clearly saw the folly of bravado, 'I demand your sympathy: I am a much injured man.'

'You are injured by yourself alone!' I cried. 'In her own interest, Lady Kestral would never have encouraged the ground-

less claim of her son. 'Twas you who urged him on, and excited his cupidity, with the view of extorting money from Davie Adams. You might have succeeded had your step-son been as astute as you, for Davie would have sacrificed much to hide your wife's shame ; but the cub grew ungovernable, and forced you to this climax.'

Lord Kestral stood up, and would have spoken, but that anger paralyzed his tongue.

At that moment, the servant who had been sent to seek Lady Kestral entered the room.

'Throw open the door ; let her come in !' cried Lord Kestral.

The frightened servant threw the door open ; no one came in.

'Where is she ? Where is my wife ? Where is Lady Kestral ?'

'Go—go—gone !' answered the fellow, stuttering with terror.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE DEPARTURE OF LORD AND LADY KESTRAL.

‘**G**ONE ! what do you mean by that?’ asked Lord Kestral.

‘I do’ know, your lordship ; that’s what Bessy chambermaid told me to say. ’Taint no fault of mine,’ he added, edging away from my uncle and appealing to the Squire.

‘Do you mean that her ladyship has left the house?’ asked Squire Humphrey.

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Who saw her go?’

‘Bessy chambermaid, and Jim the shoe-boy, sir.’

‘Fetch them here at once.’

They presently entered the room, and I recognised in Jim the boy whom I had seen perched on the rail during the fight. They both seemed to be in mortal fear of Lord Kestral—I know not why. Perhaps the instinct is not confined to dogs, which leads them to know and fear persons who are treacherous and spiteful towards them.

Squire Humphrey addressed the girl, and asked the same question he had put to the man.

‘Her ladyship went away half an hour ago,’ the girl said.

‘Did she leave any message?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Did she go on foot?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Didn’t she ask to see anyone?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Speak up, girl. No one will hurt you. Tell me what you know about her ladyship’s departure.’

‘Well, sir, last night she bade me call her at six ; and when I went to her this morning, she told me there was going to be a duel fought, and promised to give me a crown if I could find out where it was to be fit, and let her know which gentleman won—his lordship or t’other one—but she never gave me the crown, sir.’

‘I was to had a shillun on it, but ne’er a penny have I got,’ remarked the boy.

‘Go on, girl.’

‘When Jim brought word how it had ended, I ran up and told her ladyship. She was dressed, and all ready to go ; she had her bonnet and gloves on. She had the window wide open, and she sat there with the rain a-beating in on her fine feathers—a sight to

see ; and she had a basin on her lap, and was slopping the water over her face, for all her pink gloves, and the water running down over her dress, and her face all black and red, like I never see ! And when I told her, she jumped up, taking no notice of the basin in her lap, which fell on the floor and broke in a dozen bits, enough to wake all the young mistresses, though they do sleep so heavy nowadays ; and she began to talk a lot of stuff as hadn't neither head nor tail, for what I could make out.'

'What *did* she say ?'

'Why, sir, one moment she said as she was going to play Mrs. Pinchwife, and then she fell to laughing, and ran across the room and out on the landing, and I do think she'd have thrown herself down stairs if I hadn't a-held her, saying as she could fly like a moth, so be I'd let her. Then she said as she was going to be married now she

was at last a widow, and would marry Mr. Adams, if so be she could find none better.

‘ “ Why, your ladyship,” says I, “ Mr. Adams is killed.”

‘ She stopped when I told her that, and held her forehead in her two wet hands; then says she :

‘ “ If he’s dead, I will go and throw myself on the protection of my daughter.”

‘ We was in the hall then, and she ran out of the house, and I see her going down the drive, staggering from one side to the other, and just then one of the gentlemen ran into the house to bid Thomas and Blake carry the mattress down to the paddock, and I see no more of her ladyship, for when I went back to the door and looked down the drive, she was gone.’

‘ Didn’t you make any effort to stop her—didn’t you call your mistress ?’

‘ Lord, sir, there was no holding of her.

She was as strong as a man—Jim there see how she tore herself away and flung me back when I laid hold of her.’

‘That she did, a good’ne,’ Jim said, with a broad grin.

‘And I din’t know what to do. I din’t like to call mistress, for why—though I don’t like to say it before you, my lord—there was no mistake about it : her ladyship was in liquor.’

There was a rap at the open door, and the lodge-keeper came in, hat in hand, and panting for breath, as if he had been running.

‘Ask your pardon, gentlemen,’ he said, ‘but if you please, sir, here’s Mr. Harley’s two shepherds brought Lady Kestral to the lodge, and there she be now. They found her pretty nigh smothered in a ditch, and she seems like as if she was out of her mind, she do, sir.’

Lord Kestral listened to this announcement as he had listened to the former, in seeming apathy. He sat sideways by the table, with one hand resting upon it ; his little humid eyes were fixed upon me.

‘ You hear, my lord,’ said Squire Humphrey, stopping on his way to the door ; ‘ your wife is ill.’

‘ I hear,’ he answered, without moving or turning his eyes from me. ‘ ’Tis another of her Jezebel tricks.’

‘ Do you wish her to be brought into the house ?’

‘ No. Be good enough to let your fellows put her in the chaise. I will follow you. I have a word or two to say to my nephew, here.’

Squire Humphrey made no objection ; indeed, he looked to be not ill-pleased that his offer was declined. He left the room fol-

lowed by his friends, and Lord Kestral and I remained alone—he at one end of the table, I at the other.

‘You seem to be thoroughly conversant with this dead gardener’s affairs,’ he said. ‘Perhaps you may be able to tell me how he has disposed of his property?’

‘I can.’

‘Will you tell me what provision he has left for his master’s wife and child?’

‘He has made no provision whatever for them,’ I said. ‘He has left the whole of his estate to me.’

‘Ha!’ he exclaimed, with a sneer. ‘I did you an injustice. You are not such a fool as I thought you to be. You’ve managed this business exceeding well—so far as the gardener was concerned; but how about your uncle?—Do you think you have done with me?’

I rose from the table without replying,

put the papers in my breast, and buttoned my coat.

‘I find it difficult to believe,’ he pursued, ‘that a man who was so attached to his master’s wife and child left them without a farthing. I am inclined to think he must have made some stipulation which you overlook. You may have to marry my step-daughter, for instance——’

‘I shall marry her,’ said I.

‘That depends. I may choose to take her with me upon my forced voyage. She is pretty, and will be an agreeable companion. You know that the law gives me some authority over her, I suppose?’

‘You will have to answer for the death of Davie before you can prove any legal authority over her; and by that time she will be my wife,’ I cried.

‘Ah! we shall see,’ he said, rising from his chair with an air of composure and self-

satisfaction which it was impossible to believe unassumed.

I went towards the door in angry haste.

‘Pardon me,’ he said, raising his hand.

I stopped, wondering what he had to say. He made a very lofty movement of his head, and marched out of the room before me.

The rain still fell heavily and steadily. I heard my uncle cursing as I passed him ; he had not considered that he should have to walk through the rain to the lodge, or he would not have sent the post-chaise on in advance. The stoutest coat was not proof against the persistent downpour.

The chaise stood against the lodge. As I drew near I could see by the movement of the gentlemen that my aunt was being carried to it ; I heard her voice—she talked ceaselessly. One brought a glass of water and passed it to her. She was

drinking with feverish eagerness, when I looked through the window. Her face was crimson: here and there were purple blotches; her clothes were saturated and smeared with mud. No sooner had she taken the glass from her lips than she began to talk—loosely, incoherently, addressing now one, now another, without purpose. She looked at me, but without knowing me, as it seemed, and when her husband came up she told him that Lord Kestral was dead, and that Davie would marry her, and give Delia a mother and a father as well—an idea that was more fixed in her mind than any other, for she had repeated it, as I heard, again and again, mixed with the most irrelevant matter touching her furniture, her dress, and the parts she had played, and would play again, at the little theatre in the Haymarket.

‘Your wife is delirious—she is in a high fever,’ said the Squire to Lord Kestral.

‘You will do well to obtain advice as quickly as possible.’

‘Sir!’ replied Lord Kestral, with grand formality—which would have appeared to any of us as most ridiculous and unseemly, had it not been for the tragic circumstances—‘Sir, I thank you for your advice, not less than for your hospitality and the support of your friends, and I wish you good-day.’

As a sheep-stealer being condemned to death puts on an heroic air and poses as a martyr when he is nought but a contemptible thief, so my uncle assumed a magnificent pomposity, and carried off the shame and mortification which a man of better feeling in his position would have suffered to be seen. He bowed to those before him with as much ceremony as if they were ambassadors, turned and spoke a word or two to the postboy, and then stepped into the chaise. My aunt drew her skirts

together coquettishly as he entered, for she certainly did not recognise him as her husband, and put her hand upon his arm as he took the seat by her side ; he removed it at once, and drew up the window.

The chaise started off, and we saw no more of them.





## CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH GEORGE IS CHARGED WITH BEING  
TOO CLEVER BY HALF.

**S**QUIRE HUMPHREY would have had me wait and take a seat in his coach, he being minded to go at once to the Hall and express his sympathy with Miss Bond, and his regret in having had a hand in this unfortunate business ; but I brusquely declined his offer, and left him without further ceremony. Now that I had discharged my duty to poor Davie, my whole thought centred upon Delia, from whom it would be impossible to

conceal for long her terrible bereavement. At that moment Mr. Rogers might be breaking the news to her. How would she bear the shock? How could she be reconciled to the loss of that dear friend, who had been more to her than father and mother, who had exposed himself to ridicule and insult for her sake, and, furthermore, laid down his life! My heart ached by the mere anticipation of her suffering, and my grief was rendered more poignant by the sense of my own loss; for Davie had endeared himself to me, not only by those acts of generosity which I have recorded here, but by numberless thoughtful little services and testimonies of affectionate consideration in our daily intercourse, scarcely noticed at the time, but well remembered now. He was a man that one could laugh at now and then, and for that reason was far more lovable than if there

had been no weakness or imperfection in his character. I am not ashamed of the tears I shed as I walked along the sodden lane, and thought of all the good that was gone from the world with the life of poor Davie.

I heard footsteps approaching, and the sound of a man's voice, and I held down my head that I might not be seen weeping. The path was all blurred and indistinct under my eyes as I plodded on.

The footsteps came nearer ; suddenly they stopped, and a voice cried :

‘George ! where is my father?’

It was Delia's voice. I raised my eyes in astonishment. She stood before me wrapped in a long cloak, with the hood drawn over her head : her face was white and drawn, with a strenuous look of fear and anxiety. A few steps behind her stood

the gardener—'twas his voice, probably in pointing me out to his mistress, that I heard in the distance.

‘Where is my father, George?’ Delia faltered.

‘Have you not seen Mr. Rogers?’ I repeated.

‘I don’t ask for him : I ask for my father. He left the house with you this morning : where is he now?’

‘He went away with Mr. Rogers and the doctor half an hour ago.’

‘He went away ! Do you mean he walked away with them?’

My voice fell.

‘They carried him away,’ I said.

‘The servants did not lie to me, then. He did go to fight a duel. And he is wounded !’

‘Yes,’ I murmured.

‘He is wounded slightly, dear, not dan-

gerously ; he will soon get over it ?' she asked, in a tone of supplication.

'I dare not bid you hope, Delia, love,' said I, holding out my hand.

'No, no!' she cried, starting back; 'I will not take your hand till I know more. Why don't you tell me the truth? Why do you prevaricate?' She stamped her foot angrily. 'Say at once there is nothing to hope for—tell me my father is dead.'

I could not summon the words to my lips.

'Or that he is dangerously hurt,' she pursued, after waiting a moment for my answer—'that there is scarcely any hope of his recovery, and yet that he still lives.'

Her voice dropped again to trembling petition, and she caught my hand up from my side, and pressed it eagerly.

'I lost my temper, George. I was wrong ; I thought you were going to tell me he was no more. But he is only wounded.' She

laughed hysterically. ‘ Severely—yes, yes, I know that ; but by chance he may recover—though almost by a miracle, he will be given back to me, dear. Tell me that, George !’

‘ I cannot tell you that, Delia.’

She dropped my hand.

I dared not raise my eyes from the hem of her cloak, on which they were fixed.

There was a minute’s pause—a time of awful stillness and fear. Then, in a low, still voice, she said:

‘ Dead !’

We stood there motionless and silent many minutes, as it seemed to me. When I raised my eyes I found her looking at me in apathy, as if unable to comprehend the ill that had befallen her. Presently she asked:

‘ Where have they taken my father ?’

‘ To the village,’ I replied.

She turned about, and walked along

slowly, retracing the steps she had lately taken in such haste. I walked beside her in silence.

The gardener held his chin in his hand, and looked at us askant as we passed, and let us go on some distance before he followed.

Delia seemed unable to realize the fact even then, for presently she repeated the word 'dead' in a tone of bewilderment, and continued, as if explaining it to herself:

'Gone away, not to return ever; left me here, never to see me again. Dead! lost for ever! never to gossip with me about trifles, George; never to indulge my fickle fancies, nor scold me when I carry them too far; never to tell me about the growth of plants, and the things he loved with his simple, honest heart! And that heart beats no more; his lips are silent, and his kind eyes will never follow me again! Gone—gone! Oh, my God! why am I left?' Then,

with a long, low, quivering cry, she burst into tears.

What could I say to comfort her? All words seemed inadequate and vain. I drew near to her, and laid my hand upon her arm. She snatched her arm away, and, taking her hands from her face, looked at me in passionate anger and contempt.

‘Do not touch me,’ she cried; ‘you are base and cruel—false to me and to him. He was your friend, but you were not his, and shall not be mine. You knew how I loved him—how dear he was to me; you knew how he loved me—yet you went with him to his death; you stood by and saw him murdered; you concealed his danger from me, that I might not save him; you have not a wound, not a scratch, not a sign to show that you made any attempt to help him. Had you loved me in the least, you

would have thrown yourself between the sword and his body.'

It was not for me then to vindicate my action, or to show how inevitable the duel was.

'George,' she said, with resolution, 'I will never speak to you again;' and a moment afterwards her resolution gave way, and she cried, falling again into tears:

'Oh, there is not one friend left to me! All, all are gone from me!'

It is needless to relate the painful efforts I made to appease the unhappy girl as we walked to the village. A woman might have succeeded in soothing her troubled spirits; my words seemed only to provoke her grief.

In eight or ten minutes we reached the village and came in sight of the inn, whither I expected Davie's body had been carried. The blinds in the upper window were drawn

down, and despite the wet, a group of three or four men stood at the door, with their heads drawn together in whispered conversation. Catching sight of us, the gossipers entered the inn hurriedly. The next moment Drench came out.

Delia drew her hood lower over her eyes, and paused as if to gain strength. Then, with a deep-drawn sigh, she moved onwards again.

Drench came up and met us.

‘Here’s a morning! Upon my honour, Miss Adams, ’tis not fit for you to be out of doors.’

It was clear to me, from the tone he took, that he had arranged with Mr. Rogers to conceal the truth from Delia; and I would have made signs to him that she knew all, but he was so concerned with the state of his legs, having had the mischance to set his foot in a puddle, that he could look at

nothing else for a few moments as he walked along by Delia's side.

Delia made no reply to his observation, and he continued :

‘Mr. Rogers has gone up to the Hall to take the news to you, Miss Adams, but I suppose you have learnt it from Mr. Falkland.’

Delia sobbed, and dropped her head.

Drench looked at me in inquiry.

I nodded and frowned at him, to let him understand that she knew all.

He gave his head a contemptuous jerk, and gave me a look which was as much as to say that I was an idiot to have told her. Then he glanced sidelong at Delia, with the shrewd comprehensive expression I had so often detected in his face when my arm was in danger.

‘You know the worst, then, Miss Adams,’ he said tenderly.

She sobbed again.

Once more he jerked his head and drew down the corners of his mouth, projected his under-lip, and gave me a glance of contempt.

The group of idlers fell back as we came to the door of the inn. Drench led the way into the house.

‘I’ll make free to turn you out of your bar-parlour, ma’am, for five minutes,’ said he to the landlady, with a wink.

‘Oh, most certainly, to be sure, doctor,’ said she, opening the little side door in a flutter. ‘Will the poor dear young lady take anything?’

‘You can warm a little negus as quickly as possible, ma’am,’ he replied.

The good woman seized a bottle of port and a funnel, and trotted off to her kitchen as fast as her weight and the infirmity of her limbs permitted. When we were in the parlour, Drench shut the door, and bringing

forward the landlady's high-backed arm-chair, he said:

‘First of all, you must take off that cloak—not to spoil our landlady's chair—that is the string, I think? Allow me—so. Doctors are privileged, you know. Falkland, take this cloak in the kitchen, and hang it before the fire.’

He put the cloak in my hands with a vicious look, as if it gratified his spite to get me out of the room.

‘I should like to see him at once, doctor,’ said Delia plaintively.

‘So you shall, though it's a sad sight, just as soon as ever I see you strong enough. Ah! here comes our fine old landlady. Tell her, Falkland, to keep out of the room till the negus is ready,’ and he quietly but firmly pushed me out of the parlour and shut the door.

When I went back, I found Delia seated

in the great chair, with her head bent down and her handkerchief in her lap, catching her breath now and then, but listening with some sort of composure to Drench, who, seated before her, was pouring out a string of trite and commonplace observations upon death and loss, such as any old woman might utter; but, oddly enough, they seemed to be the very kind of thing that Delia needed, which has never ceased to be a source of surprise to me, who know so well how highly cultivated is her mind, and how superior are her feelings to those of ordinary women.

‘Talks like a book, upon my word he do!’ whispered the landlady in my ear, with deep admiration in her glance, as she came in with the negus in her hand.

‘Ah, here is the negus!—thank you, ma’am,’ said he, pouring it out. ‘Not quite enough—about half a glass more, warmed

very gradually, so as not to boil out the spirit, and we shall be very much obliged to you, my good madam.'

This was clearly a ruse to get rid of the old lady, and keep her out of the way, for he was satisfied when Delia had taken but a quarter of the quantity that had been brought her.

'Now you feel stronger, don't you?' he asked. 'You look more yourself. I think you may put that handkerchief in your pocket.'

'I won't cry, doctor,' she said submissively. 'I think you may take me to see him now.'

'Very well ; but I want first to caution you against making a noise. You must go into the room as silently as ever you can.'

'Silently,' cried Delia, catching at the hope that word conveyed, yet not daring to express it in words.

‘ We have been talking a great deal about death and bereavement, and how hard it is to bear,’ said Drench ; ‘ and that I hope will lead you to understand the necessity of being cautious in even slight matters ; for a fatal result might have been averted from many a dangerous wound——’

‘ A dangerous wound ! Oh, doctor, is my father—is he—is he——’

‘ Is he wounded dangerously ? Yes, my dear young lady—he is wounded dangerously.’

‘ Oh, doctor, doctor !’ she cried, and catching up his hand, she took it to her lips and kissed it again and again. Then, turning upon me with angry eyes, she said :

‘ George told me he was dead.’

‘ I dare say he did ; but you see,’ he added with intense satisfaction, and nodding in my face, ‘ George is too clever by half !’



## CHAPTER XVI.

### DRENCH'S TYRANNY.

**D**RENCH would fain have kept me out of Davie's room, but I would not be denied the gratification of seeing the friend whom I had so lately mourned as dead, and I followed Delia and the doctor upstairs and into the darkened room. I saw Davie's head upon the pillow, and while I looked his lips parted and I heard him breathe ; satisfied with this evidence, I submitted to the silent direction of Drench, and left the room.

Delia had dropped upon her knees beside

the bed ; she was there as I closed the door, her hands clasped, and her eyes fixed in adoration upon Davie's face.

Downstairs I found Mr. Rogers questioning the landlady.

‘She is upstairs, I am told,’ he said, coming to me.

‘Yes.’

‘Thank heaven ! I went to the Hall to break the news to her, and found that she had left the house in a condition bordering on madness. The servants suspected what was going on. The lad who drove Perrotin to Maidstone learnt as much as he could tell him, and overheard Adams directing the coachman to drive to Squire Humphrey's. Of course, the maids no sooner heard of it than they carried the news to Miss Adams. Without waiting for a trap to be got ready, she took the gardener for a guide, and left

the house. Miss Dobson was then told, and as soon as the poor old gentlewoman could get dressed, she started in pursuit of Miss Adams. The coach must have passed you, or taken another road.'

'That's possible. But tell me about Davie—until ten minutes ago I thought he was a dead man. Drench declared he was dead in the field there.'

'I believe he thought so himself at first, though he declared to me after that he said so only to scare Kestral and his friends, and with some show of indignation asked if I thought he was such a consumed fool as to be deceived by a syncope, or to give up a good patient before every means to preserve him had failed. The fact is, I think the position of the wound justified his first opinion, for undoubtedly, had Kestral's arm been as vigorous as his hand was skilful, Adams would be dead now. If the steel

had gone half an inch deeper, Drench, with all his cleverness—and he is clever—could not have saved him.’

‘Was it long before he revived?’

‘We had not gone a dozen yards in the coach before Drench found signs of life. He happily had a brandy-flask in his pocket——’

‘I never knew him without it; but ’tis most part of the time empty.’

‘He had exercised some self-restraint, then, for it was full. I need not go into details—they are not pleasant.’ He moved his arm, which was, I perceived, plentifully stained with blood, and pursued: ‘When the coughing subsided, it seemed that the whole vital apparatus was relieved and free to act. He opened his eyes, and after a few minutes he spoke, and I may tell you that his first thought was of you. “Falkland?” he said, in a tone of interrogation. I told

him we had left you behind, and he nodded his head in contentment. What happened to you? As we moved off, it struck me that you stood more in need of Drench's help than poor Adams, for I protest I thought him dead. Come, let us sit down. I think this is the proper time to drink; and you shall tell me how you fared.'

We sat down, and I told my friend all that had happened at Squire Humphrey's, with a brief account of Lady Kestral's history—there now being, as I considered, no reason for further concealment—and of Davie's untiring devotion and constant fidelity. When I had concluded, Mr. Rogers meditated for some moments, and then, striking the table, said:

'By the lord, Falkland! I would sooner be that man than the most admired hero in the world. Could you use the pen but as well as you handle the chisel, I would have

you write this man's life and set aside your "mute inglorious Milton." For sure,' says he, 'there is more to ennoble us, and more to love, in contemplating the character of such a man as Adams, than in the noblest marbles of Phidias himself.'

These words made a deep impression on my mind, and I wished at the time with all my heart that I had the literary skill to do justice to such a subject.

At this point the bustling of our landlady to the door, together with the crunching of hoofs in the soft road outside, attracted our attention, and going to the window, I perceived Squire Humphrey with two of his friends pulling up before the inn.

I ran out at once, hoping to hear some tidings of Miss Dobson.

'Have you seen anything of Miss Bond?' inquired the Squire anxiously.

'Yes,' said I, in a low voice, and pointing

towards the upper window. 'She is here.'

'Thank the Lord!' he exclaimed; 'her governess is up at the house—at least, there I left her—and in a pretty taking, I assure you; for it seems her young lady got wind of the affair and left the Hall in a frenzy. A pretty to-do is here, upon my soul! My wife and daughters are all in the megrims, or some other confounded fashionable disorder, and charge the whole of this unfortunate business on me, though 'twas to humour them that I took any hand in it. Well, well! there shall be no more lying abed o' mornings, and languishing about on sofas of an afternoon, I promise 'em, for I've had enough of the fashion to last me my lifetime, I have. If they don't choose to make butter they shall eat dry bread, as I tell 'em, and if they can't eat their dinner at two o'clock, like Christians, they shall go

without it. They brought poor Adams here?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ An honest man as ever breathed, and if I had followed my own leading this would never have come about. The parson shall preach about Samson every Sunday betwixt this and Michaelmas, that I bear in mind the folly of giving way to a wife. Ah, I spy the top of a coach over the quickset yonder—’tis Miss Thingamy, I warrant, and now there’ll be another scene! Well, I’m richly served for misdoubting an honest man, and putting my trust in princes.’ He spoke so fast and continuously—being warm with wine, which he had probably taken in excess to forget the misfortunes of the morning and the unjust reproaches of his family—that I had no chance of speaking. He continued : ‘ The best thing I’ve done this morning was to frighten young pudge

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out of his wits—you know who I mean—the bastard that's helped do this business. I found him sneaking in the kitchen, inquiring of the servants as to what had taken place, and I warrant you he didn't stay long after I found him. I told him what *he* was, and I told him what *his* mother was, and says I, "The best thing you can do is to follow your stepfather out of the country, and run shy of the constable, and that pretty quick too, for if I find you on my estate after five minutes, you shall have a souse in the horse-pond." He didn't wait to be twice warned, but scuttled off as fast as his little legs would carry him.'

The Squire would have laughed at this reminiscence, but recollecting himself in time, turned it off with a cough, and gave his nag a switch.

' 'Tis she, sure enough,' he said, catching sight of the coach as his horse moved, 'and in

about two minutes we shall have the screaming and crying all over again. However, I'll stay it out, and I may as well get down and go in the house as linger out here in the rain, for I'm determined to make Miss Bond a handsome apology'—he stifled a hiccough—'a handsome apology—for my misconduct.'

'You had better choose a more fitting opportunity,' I suggested.

'If that's your advice, sir,' he said cheerfully, 'I will, most certainly; for, to tell you the truth, these events coming one a-top of the other have so upset me, that I'm like enough to make a fool of myself;' then, giving a hasty glance at the coach, which was now close upon his heels, he said a word or two to his companions, whose red faces, sleepy eyes, and solemn silence showed that they also had been drinking heavily, gave his horse a cut, and the party scoured off.

Poor Miss Dobson's manner contrasted strangely with the Squire's, and with what he had anticipated. She said not a word. Fright and distress seemed to have deprived her of speech. Her hands were clasped together, and she looked at me imploringly as I went to the door of the coach. In a few words I told her that I had met Delia, that she was in the inn, and that Davie, though dangerously wounded, yet lived. The poor soul wrung her hands, and the tears ran down her cheeks, as she listened, and when I concluded, she wept afresh, and her trembling lips parted, as if to utter some word of gratitude to Heaven for the preservation of her good master and friend.

I took her into the little parlour, and there she stayed until Delia came softly down the stairs, followed by Drench, when she rose and went sobbing to meet her. The two women embraced, and Delia said :

‘Don’t cry, dear,’—her own voice was choked with sobs, for women must weep in simple sympathy—‘don’t cry. ’Tis all well now. I have seen him—I have heard him—he spoke to me in his sweet gentle manner, and gaily; and I have kissed him, and the doctor says he will grow strong, and come back to us again. Doctor Drench’—here she fell back and pointed affectionately to Drench, who had fallen to scratching the dry mud off his stocking—‘Doctor Drench has saved him. We owe him the life of my dear father, for he will not die now, will he, doctor?’

‘No! We may confidently hope that he will recover. But his life depends upon perfect calm, and for that reason, my dear young lady, I wish you to go home to the Hall with Miss Dobson, and leave our patient entirely to me.’

‘I will do whatever you bid me,’ she replied eagerly; ‘but you will let me see

papa sometimes, if I make no noise, and go directly you tell me?’

‘You shall see him this evening, and then you must not ask to visit him again for quite twenty-four hours.’

‘I promise that : you will find that I am not a foolish girl, and that I keep my word.’

‘Very good. Now go home with Miss Dobson as soon as you can—I see there is a coach waiting at the door—and eat a good breakfast; for your father must not see you with pale cheeks and hollow eyes, or it will retard his recovery.’

‘Ah! you shall see how well I look to-night. I am quite happy—happier than I have been for a long, long while. I have so much to hope for now. Come, dear,’ she added, turning to Miss Dobson, ‘lean upon my arm—all your weight; I am strong. Let us go at once;’ then, turning to Drench,

and with a sudden access of fear, 'but you will let me know if anything happens?'

'If there is any change for the worse I promise to let you know. I will send Falkland with a message.'

She pressed his hand warmly, and we all went out to the coach. I opened the door. She glanced at me and turned her eyes away angrily. When she and Miss Dobson were seated, Mr. Rogers, at my suggestion, took the third place, and I was taking off my riding-coat, which was now saturated with rain, in order to follow him, when Delia stopped me :

'Doctor Drench may want you ; you had better not leave the inn,' she said coldly.

'Very good,' said I. 'Certainly I shall not intrude where I am not wanted,' and with a stiff bow I turned away.

'Tis in the nature of those attacked by

fever to be hot and cold by turns, to be irritable and unreasonable ; and the fever of love had never a stronger hold of me than at that time : this is the only excuse I can find for taking umbrage at Delia's treatment of me. I did not consider then how all her thoughts and emotions were centred in the man she thought to be her father, nor how inexcusable in her estimation my seeming connivance at the duel must be ; nor did I make any allowance for her being alike under the influence of that fever which so disturbed my own judgment. I only conceived that I was prodigiously ill-used. She shook hands again with Drench before the coach started, which made me mad with a jealousy that now provokes my laughter, but then excited my spleen, to such a degree that I was heartily pleased when, the coach moving sharply before he expected it, his toes narrowly escaped being run over, and

the skirt of his coat was spattered and smeared with mud from end to side by the hind-wheel.

My ill-humour lasted about half an hour, and then I began to see my own folly, and wished for an opportunity of proving to Delia my tender consideration and submission.

About mid-day Drench, having been with Davie for the space of an hour, came down, and in reply to my question said that Davie had fallen asleep, which was the best thing in the world that could have happened to him.

‘I shall go up to the Hall and tell Delia,’ said I.

‘You’ll do nothing of the kind, if you please,’ he replied, in an authoritative tone. ‘In the first place, I said I should send you up if there were any ill news to report, and your presence would alarm her, and lead

her to suppose you were lying to spare her feelings; and in the second place, I don't wish her to know that Adams is going on so mighty favourably, or there would be no keeping her out of his room. What a dullard you are, Falkland! I have half a mind to take advantage of this opportunity—cut you out, and marry the girl myself; for, begad! she is too delicate for your keeping. That wench in the kitchen is more suited to such a husband as you will make.'

'What do you mean?' I asked hotly.

'Don't you see that the girl's state is as critical as her father's? She has eaten nothing for days, I'll take my oath, and she is supported by mere strength of will and mental excitement; a little more would undo her. There's fever in the neighbourhood, and she is in just the condition to take it. Her mind must be relaxed, and her

body braced up, and you are about the very worst person in the world to be near her. For that reason I'm heartily glad she is offended with you, and if I can say anything to keep you two at a distance from each other, I shall say it.'

I resigned myself to his direction, but fretted impatiently at my forced inactivity, while Drench drank brown brandy, and smoked innumerable clay pipes of tobacco, and chatted freely with the landlady.

Mr. Rogers came in about one o'clock, and we three sat down to a dish of boiled pork which the landlady had dressed for us. He told us that he had taken breakfast with Delia, and left her in good spirits. After dinner, he took me aside, and told me that he would return to London, having learnt from Drench that, practically speaking, Davie was out of danger, if I had no further need of his services. I did not

oppose his departure ; and so, having sent on a boy with his valise, we walked together, in the afternoon, to Maidstone—the rain having given over—where we arrived in ample time for the evening coach. We parted with mutual hopes of soon meeting again under happier conditions, and I walked back to Maplehurst, there to find that Delia had made her visit and returned to the Hall in my absence.





## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE BLACK DEATH.

**W**HILE the landlady was giving me this information, Drench came downstairs. ‘Adams has asked for you,’ said he. ‘Come up with me ; but let him see you with a cheerful countenance, if you please.’

The room was wonderfully neat and tidy, for Drench was as good a nurse as he was a doctor ; the blind was drawn up, and on the dressing-table before the window were two pots of flowers—pansies and mignonette—Davie’s favourite plants.

I knew who had placed them there.

Davie greeted me with a glad smile, and a look of tenderness in his pleasant eyes. He raised his hand, which lay upon the coverlet, and pressed mine warmly.

‘I mustn’t move, and I mustn’t talk,’ he said in a feeble voice, turning his eyes with a smile towards Drench; ‘but I shall lie easier, having seen you, and be more at peace, knowing how matters stand.’ He glanced towards the flowers on the table, and continued: ‘She has been here, you see; it seemed queer like, not to see you by her side, sir!’

‘That’s enough, Mr. Adams,’ said Drench; ‘Falkland will do the talking.’

‘I did not expect Delia would come so early,’ said I, ‘and I have been to Maidstone with Mr. Rogers. Seeing that you were out of danger, and that he could not be of further service at present, he has re-

turned to London ; but he begged me to assure you that he would come and spend a longer holiday with us as soon as you could invite him to the Hall.'

'That won't be for two or three weeks,' said Drench. 'I shan't let my patient get on his legs till he is strong enough to stand on 'em. I doubt but 'twill be a month and more before we get ourselves into good fighting trim again.'

'That's of little consequence,' said I, 'for he'll find no one to fight. Lord Kestral, under the impression that you are a dead man, has taken flight ; by this time he is out of the country, and for his own sake he is likely to keep out of it. He hasn't a friend in this county, or anywhere else, I believe.'

'They've come over to us,' said Drench ; 'a score of people have called while you were away—there's a plateful of cards on the chest of drawers there. The whole pack

has turned, and Kestral is likely to share the fate of what's-his-name in Pausanias—Actæon, or somebody—who was devoured by his own dogs.'

'You can understand how this has come about. I had no hope of seeing you again, Davie, alive; and——' I took the papers from my breast-pocket, and laid them on the coverlet.

'I have heard something about that paper,' said Drench, 'and I suppose I am about the only one now who has to take your honour on faith, Mr. Adams. If the contents of that document are no longer to be kept secret, I should like to read it, if you have no objection.'

Davie gave the paper, and Drench took it to the window to read—for the evening was now advanced and the light waning.

'She has learnt the facts,' Davie said, as I sat down by his side; 'learnt 'em, I dare

say, from the ladies who have called upon her. But it has made no alteration in her feeling for me.'

'It could only increase her love—were that possible — to know that you have done so much for her from love alone, and not from self-interest or duty.'

Davie smiled, and turned his glance towards the pansies, whilst the tears filled his eyes. After a minute or two of silence, he said in a tone of interrogation :

'Her mother?'

'Lord Kestral took her with him. You need be in no concern for her : my uncle will not forget your promise, nor fail to avail himself of it.'

I thought it best to say nothing of my aunt's illness at that moment. Davie seemed satisfied with my suggestion, and lay meditating in silence.

'Well !' exclaimed Drench, coming from

the window, 'all's well that ends well. If you hadn't fought, Mr. Adams, if you hadn't been wounded, and if I hadn't declared you dead, this wouldn't have come out, and you might have been badgered and tormented by that old fox and his adopted cub till human endurance could stand it no longer. But why on earth——' he paused, scratching his chin in perplexity. 'Ah, I see! if you had shown the will to the old man, he could have taken Miss Bond under his tender care, to say nothing of punishing her mother for the deception. Well, heaven be praised, all the difficulties are settled, and the devil has his due.'

'Aye, sir, thank Heaven!' said Davie.

Drench now insisted upon my leaving Davie. As I took Davie's hand, bidding him good-night, he said, with some anxiety in his weak voice :

'I believe that all danger is past for

Delia ; but you will not lose sight of her, Mr. Falkland—will you, sir?’

I gave him my promise, and left the room with a lightened heart. I sat down with Drench for best part of an hour over a pot of tea—which drink he was vastly fond of—and I believe I should have fallen asleep in the chair had I sat there any longer, for I now for the first time began to feel the effects of the excessive exertion to which both my body and my mind had been put, and of the long absence of repose ; but I roused myself, and going out into the yard, dipped my head in a bucket of spring water, to get rid of the drowsy feeling that had overtaken me ; for not only had I promised Davie to keep Delia in sight, but my inclinations prompted me to see her if possible this night, in the hope that she would now regard my conduct in another light, and be more kind to me.

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When I had smartened myself a little, I got my hat, and without a word to Drench, who, with his wig over his eyes, his head thrown back on the chair, and his hand still lying on his darling clay pipe, was sound asleep and snoring loudly, I slipped out of the inn and walked off towards the Hall.

A thick mist rose from the saturated earth, shedding a dim grey light upon the path, just sufficient to keep me from straying into the ditches, but not enough to make more distant objects distinct. The night was wonderfully still. The fall of a drop from the charged foliage over my head, the chiming of a distant clock, the crunching of the soft road under my feet—these were the only sounds I heard for the first ten minutes. Then I caught the sound of wheels coming towards me, and I fell to speculating whether the sound was of a waggon or of a coach moving slowly. It must have been far

away when I first heard it, for I walked five minutes, and still it approached. Then little by little it seemed to recede and grow fainter. I found the explanation of this mystery shortly, when I came to the crossing where the lane was cut by the road that runs from Maidstone to New Romney. The vehicle had turned aside here. I paused to listen: the sound was now so faint that I could not distinguish whether it came from the right or the left.

I went on, slowly at times, for where the lane was narrow and the hedges high it was impossible to see even the ground on which I walked. The clock chimed again; I began to speculate as to my whereabouts, thinking that possibly I had passed the Hall gates, when, to my relief, I heard the heavy steps of a man coming towards me. When the sound was quite close I stopped, and asked where I was.

‘Be that you, Master Falkland?’ replied a voice from the obscurity.

‘Yes.’

‘I thought I knowed your voice, sir. I were just a going for you, sir, seeing you’re wanted quick as possible up at Hall.’

‘Where is the Hall?—who wants me?’ I asked.

‘Hall be about quarter o’ mile up along, sir, and ’tis Miss Dobson as wants you.’

‘Has anything happened—is anyone ill?’ I asked.

‘Not as I knows on, sir—not more ’an ordinary ; but such a lots of things have happened, and folks all round seems so upset likes, as it’s hard to say ’zactly what’s what.’

Without wasting time in further inquiries, I hurried on, and in a few minutes we reached the Hall. Miss Dobson, shaking with fear, met me at the door.

‘You have not met her, Mr. Falkland?’ she said quickly; ‘you have not passed the coach?’

‘I have met no one. What do you mean?’ I asked.

‘Miss Bond is gone,’ she replied.

‘Gone!’ I cried, my forebodings of ill being realized—‘whither?’

Miss Dobson told me, in confused and broken sentences, that, feeling ill, she had gone to her room upon the return of Delia from the inn, and had there fallen into a sleep, from which she was awoke by hearing the sound of carriage wheels. She had rung her bell, and a servant responding gave a letter into her hand, saying that Delia had written it, and ordered it to be delivered to Miss Dobson should she awake, but that on no account was she to be disturbed.

‘This is the letter,’ she said in conclusion,

producing a crumpled paper, which in her disorder she had unconsciously been fretting in her hands.

I opened the paper and read :

‘DEAR MISS DOBSON,

• I write this in case you may awake before my return. I beg you to be under no anxiety on my account. A messenger has brought me a letter informing me that my unhappy mother has been seized with a sickness, and lies now in sore need of help. I intend to bring her back with me, and, God grant, in a few hours.

‘DELIA.’

‘Who saw the messenger?’ I asked.

‘The maid. ’Twas a post-boy with the mails; he did not wait to give any account, having come out of his way to give

the letter, and starting off the moment 'twas delivered.'

''Tis a trick of my uncle's,' I cried ; 'a trap to kidnap Delia and carry her out of the country with him.'

I glanced at the letter again, hoping I had overlooked the name of the place where her mother was said to be lying, and finding none, I inquired of the servant which way the coach had turned after leaving the drive. She was not sure ; she thought by the sound it had turned towards Maplehurst. I then bethought me of the sounds I had heard in coming, and of the coach that turned off by the cross-roads, and I had no doubt that 'twas the carriage which carried Delia.

I ran round to the stables ; the groom who had been sent to seek me was in one of the empty stalls with a lantern. He did not know where the coach had gone,

having been sent up the drive to set the gates open while the young lady was getting into the coach. She had taken her maid and the footboy with her. Certainly the coach had turned towards Maplehurst. I told him to saddle a couple of horses and put on his coat to accompany me, and this order he obeyed with such alacrity—being a strong young fellow and eager for adventure, like most of his kind—that by the time I had been to the house and assured Miss Dobson, whom I had frightened to the last degree by my inconsiderate expression of my fears, that I should overtake Delia before she had covered a dozen miles of ground, the horses were out and he struggling into his coat.

I determined, before reaching the cross-roads, to turn in the direction of Tenterden, being convinced that Lord Kestral had made for Hythe, Dover, or some other port

from which he might embark as soon as he had got Delia under the influence of her mother; and this conclusion was further confirmed in my mind by learning from a carrier, whom we met some two miles on our way, that he had encountered a coach and pair going in the direction of Tenterden some ten or twenty minutes before. With this encouragement I gave my horse two or three sharp cuts—for the careful beast would not voluntarily advance at more than a walking pace—and in consequence was nearly thrown by his stumbling upon a heap of stones laid by the roadside.

The character of the night had not altered. There was not a breath of wind to lift the thick vapour that clung to the earth. One could see nothing beyond the horse's head, not because the night was dark, but that the mist was impenetrable:

when we passed near a thicket or a stack the grey was a shade darker, but even the outlines of the hedges were undiscernible. The groom's eyes were keener to detect the slight indications of objects than mine.

‘There be barns or houses, or some’at alongside now,’ he said, stopping his horse. He threw himself off, and with the bridle in his hand, went to the side.

‘Houses!’ said he.

He knocked at the door at my bidding, and hammered away vigorously at short intervals, until a window was pushed open, and a voice demanded angrily who knocked.

I explained what I wanted to know, but the fellow I addressed either had seen neither the coach nor the post-chaise, or was too surly to satisfy my curiosity, and presently slammed to the window, and so finished the colloquy.

‘Lor’ a mussy only knows where we are,’ said the groom, getting into his saddle.

We pushed on again, and to my great satisfaction, shortly came to a turnpike, where I learnt that a coach with two young women inside had recently passed, and that early in the morning a post-chaise had stopped, and he had been requested to give a glass of water to a lady who seemed mighty sick.

‘An’ a pretty gentleman she had for a nuss, too,’ he added; ‘the lady was running down with perspiration, but just because a spot or two of rain was falling, he would take and have the glasses up, as must have been more out o’ spite than for his own comfort, seeing as a Calcutty black-hole is fools to a po’shay with the windows up of a day like this; but, Lord, sir! there’s some men as can’t bear with sick women—seems to think

they fall ill a-purpose to aggravate 'em, and——'

I did not wait to hear the end of the pike-keeper's philosophy, but again urged my horse into a trot, impatient of delay. We went on for the best part of an hour, and then, the mist growing thinner, we could see about us with tolerable facility. We came to an inn, where a light was still burning. I leapt off my horse, and ran into the house.

The landlord declared that no vehicle, except a carrier's waggon, had passed the house in the last three hours, and he was equally certain that no post-chaise had passed during the day.

'There's not a thing as goes on wheels passes without my seeing of it. 'Tis part of my business,' he said, in corroboration. 'If they passed the pike, they must ha' turned up towards Tunbridge, or turned down towards Ashford.'

‘And where are the roads?’ I asked, in vexation.

‘Why, you must ha’ passed them at the pike,’ he replied, seeming much amused by my mischance. ‘That’s just where the pike is, to be sure—at the cross-roads.’

‘Two hours lost,’ thought I, as I threw my leg over the saddle. We returned to the toll-gate at a gallop; and though I felt sure that the coach had taken the Ashford road—which now, owing to the clearing of the mist, was obvious enough—I thought it well to put the question to the toll-keeper before going farther :

‘To be sure they went down there,’ he said sullenly ; ‘and if you’d had the civility to say good-night, instead of scampering off in the middle of my observations, I’d a took the trouble to holler after you, but as——’

I gave him a curse, and we went on

again, taking the Ashford Road, and not to protract this part of my narrative, we passed through that village a little after two in the morning at the top of our speed, having obtained by the way certain information relative to those I sought which gave a new turn to my fears.

Just beyond the village was a farmhouse by the roadside. Lights were in two of the windows ; there was a light also in an out-building a little removed from the house ; the coach stood in the road. The coachman and the footboy came to meet us, the coachman having recognised the sound of his horse's hoofs. They began to speak both together—what they said I know not. I was off my horse in an instant, and throwing back the wicket, ran up the path, and entered the house by the half-open door.

Not a soul was visible. A faint glim-

mering of light from above showed me the stairs. As I was running up, a piercing scream broke the silence. I groped my way across the landing and came upon a passage: half-way down, a feeble light came through an open door. I entered the room. A rushlight burned upon the chimney-piece. At the further end of the room an open door, communicating with another chamber, showed a second light. Was it from that room the scream came? Not from this, clearly. There was not a sound—not a murmur. A great bed, with heavy dark curtains, stood out from the wall. I took the rushlight from the chimney-piece and went towards it. The coverlet showed the outline of a motionless figure. I drew back the heavy curtain. The turning of the sheet was thrown upwards over a face. I knew not what to expect—I only was conscious that I must

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see whose face was covered, even if my wildest fear was to be confirmed. I turned back the sheet, holding the rushlight near. Two sightless eyes stared up at me from a face all black and hideously distorted. I flung the sheet back in indescribable horror. And then, as I stood there in the awful silence like one paralyzed, a scream pierced my ears again. It came from the adjoining room. Stepping back, I looked through the open door into the adjoining chamber. My uncle lay stretched upon the floor. But for his dress and figure, I might have doubted if it were he. His face, purple, and stained here and there with black blotches, was puffed and swollen out of recognition. His waistcoat and shirt were torn open, his wig was cast aside, he rolled his bald head from side to side upon the bare boards. His arms were stretched upwards and his bony hands clenched in

agony. As I looked, he writhed in pain and screamed again. A faint plaintive echo seemed to rise from the opposite side of the bed by which I stood. I ran round, shielding the light with my hand; as I drew my palm back, I saw Delia cowering by the wall, upon her knees, with her face buried in her hands.

‘Delia!’ I cried, setting down the light and raising her in my arms. ‘Delia! What do you do here?’

She looked about her in a scared, bewildered manner, and then, pointing to the bed, she said :

‘Mother !’

I half carried her down the stairs—for she was powerless to resist, and got her out to the carriage in which she had come, and lifted her into it.

‘Where is the maid you brought with your mistress?’ I asked of the coachman.

‘ Lord knows, sir. She flew away like a mad thing when she heard the plague was in the house.’

‘ Has a doctor been sent for ?’

‘ The farmer went off to Tenterden to find one soon after we arrived, sir.’

I pulled out my purse, and asked who would go into the house and stay beside my uncle until the doctor arrived. After some hesitation, the groom who had come with me volunteered for the service. I gave him the purse, saw him enter the house, and then, bidding the coachman drive at once to the Hall, I stepped into the coach beside my trembling Delia.

She threw her arms about my neck, and pressing her face against my breast, burst into an agony of tears.

‘ Oh, my darling! Comfort me, comfort me!’ she cried.

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Here let me end the hideous part of my narrative, and as briefly as possible. My uncle died before the doctor from Tenterden arrived. Drench found time to ride over to Ashford the following day, and satisfy his professional curiosity. ‘I have never seen the like before,’ said he, ‘and I hope never to see it again. I can give the disease no name. The appearances are precisely those recorded of the Black Death—a plague which seized upon hale men, and killed them in the space of three hours. It is no wonder that your uncle, debilitated by the excitement and mortification of the morning, and boxed up for hours in that post-chaise with his wife, was infected. It was an awful retribution.’



## CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH FALKLAND CONCLUDES HIS STORY.

**M**Y anxieties did not end with that terrible night. For some time afterwards Delia was confined to her room, partly by physical prostration, but chiefly by the peremptory orders of Drench. But, thanks to her excellent constitution, her condition was not at any time such as to give us serious apprehension, and our fears were happily outweighed by our hopes. After a few days she was able to receive visits, seated in her bed like any grand madam, much to the satisfaction of the

ladies of the neighbourhood, who, to their credit, showed themselves as eager to do justice to Delia as they had been hasty to do her injustice. It seemed as if they could not, to their own mind, sufficiently testify their regret for the rash judgment by which they had condemned Davie and Delia. They laid the fault to their husbands, as their husbands laid the fault to them. Never did pagan goddess receive more offerings of flowers and fruit; and to these were added pots of cream, sweetmeats, cakes, and anything in the making of which the good housewives excelled. They generally came with something to give, and always with a great deal to say. Delia, whose sweet disposition was untainted with the slightest sentiment of animosity, forgave them freely, and was glad to get away from the subject of their regrets to matters on which she could congratulate her visitors,

and showed such a lively interest in the art of making cakes, whipping cream, preserving fruit, and pickling, that everyone declared she would make the very best housewife in the world, and all thanked their stars that she was not one of your fashionable, fingle-fangle fine ladies. For since the exposure of Lady Kestral's character, a complete change had taken place in the minds of these ladies—the example being set by Squire Humphrey's lady and her daughters, who no sooner heard that they were in danger of being taken with a real illness, than they gave over feigning fictitious disorders, and, instead of lying a-bed until mid-day, rose at cock-crow, and declared one and all that they had never felt so hearty in their lives, and would never be so foolish as to give up their simple country habits for the contemptible airs and graces of fine London madams. This exemplary

intention was due perhaps as much to Squire Humphrey's determined action as to their own inclinations.

Miss Dobson allowed me to see Delia every day for ten minutes, and I never saw any picture which could compare with my love, as she sat in her snowy nightdress, with its soft frilled tucker, a coquettish little reception-cap on her head, and a tinge of pink reflected from the ribbons and silk with which the curtains of her bed were decorated, lending to her cheek just that glow of health which I so fervently prayed nature would presently give to it. It may have been a modest blush, and not the reflection of the ribbons; for her eyes twinkled prettily, and rose and fell in a charming confusion when I bent to kiss her hand there.

Heaven be thanked, I took her always good news of Davie's progress, and this con-

tributed to her recovery. As I have said, I am no actor, and my face never led her to doubt of the truth of my reports. When we parted, she would lean towards me and just touch my lips with hers, which set such fires to my heart as nought could quench. For hours and hours I walked on the lawn, happy to look at the window of the room in which she lay.

At length Davie was carried from the inn to the Hall, and, being none the worse for the journey — Drench being careful to a ridiculous degree that no premature exertion should cause a relapse—he allowed Delia the following day to leave her room and visit him. I took her downstairs, holding her around the waist—for I could not content myself with her hand—and she in frank love put her arm about my neck, and behind Miss Dobson's back we paused upon our way to kiss again and again.

Davie was seated by the open window, looking over the beautiful weald. When he saw us he rose, throwing off Drench's hand—for the doctor would have held him—and having embraced Delia, took our two hands and held them together in his in silent emotion.

‘Doctor,’ said he, when our gratulations were at an end, ‘when may I leave this room?’

‘I should say—if you don't over-excite yourself, and obey my orders—you could be carried by easy stages to some healthy, invigorating spot by the sea, and there take as much exercise as will moderately fatigue you, in about a week or so. I fancy Brithelmstone will be the best place for you.’

‘Brithelmstone be it, if there is e'er a church in it.’

‘A church!’ exclaimed Delia.

And, in truth, the stipulation seemed to

me a curious one ; for though Davie loved to go to church every Sunday, I thought he might dispense with the office for a season.

‘Aye,’ said Davie ; ‘a church where you and Mr. Falkland may be wedded ; for, look ye, sir,’ he added, turning to me, ‘you promised to marry Delia without delay if I was killed in the duel, and I think you will hardly have the heart to make me wish I had been, by putting off your marriage for the pitiful consideration of pounds and pence. I know you’ve that on the end of your tongue : you’ve been hinting at it this last week ; but I’ll listen to no rubbish of independence and the like again. We’ve had too many unavoidable troubles to add others to them which may be set aside. Come, sir, say you’ll marry Delia at this Brithelmstone, wherever it may be ?’

‘ With all my heart ! ’ I cried.

And Delia, with her eyes downcast, yet smiling sweetly, nodded her head.

But when she got the better of her confusion, she said she would like to be married at the church in the village, where we had first met ; and there, by a special licence, we were married the following week.

’Twas quite a quiet wedding, by reason of Lady Kestral’s recent death ; but in her simple dress my Delia looked more lovable, more beautiful than a queen tricked out in all the splendour of the grandest ceremony. To their inexpressible delight, the Misses Humphrey bore the part of bridesmaids. Drench was my right-hand man.

The story of my love for Delia began at that church and ends there ; but the love itself is unending.

THE END.

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